



Palestine's plea
PAGE 3



Porn and the church
PAGE 4



Journey into love
PAGE 12

Marilynne Robinson's humanist Calvinism
PAGE 20

REDEEMER COLLEGE LIBRARY
777 GARNER RD E
ANCASTER ON L9K 1J4

Dec11

A Reformed Biweekly | 65th Year of Publication | November 28, 2011 | NO. 2925 | \$

www.christiancourier.ca

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LIBRARY

CHRISTIAN COURIER
PER/BX/9401/.C36

DEC 01 2011

CHRISTIANCOURIER

A good news recovery story?

Chandra Pasma

As the economic news out of Europe seems to worsen constantly, many are wondering if Canada will be dragged back into a recession. These fears seem confirmed by a decline in Gross Domestic Product in the second quarter of this year and by massive job losses in October.

However, even before our economic recovery began to seem shaky, the reality on the ground wasn't as good as the official narrative. While some Canadians were experiencing the benefits of recovery, maintaining employment or finding a new job, for too many others recovery was either precarious or non-existent. People in this situation remain unemployed with inadequate Employment Insurance or social assistance benefits, or are precariously employed with low wages, faced with rising costs for housing and more likely to be forced to turn to food banks for support.

While we have regained the number of jobs lost during the

recession, a worrisome shift has taken place from full-time jobs to part-time jobs and from permanent jobs to temporary jobs, increasing the number of Canadians who are precariously employed. Part-time and temporary jobs are both lower-waged on average than full-time and permanent jobs. More Canadians are now involuntarily working part-time than before the recession, finding it difficult to make ends meet on part-time wages. There has also been a shift from jobs in high paying goods

industries to jobs in the low paying service industry.

High unemployment

Unemployment remains high, with 1,374,200 Canadians unable to find work in October. The number of discouraged seekers who have stopped looking for work and are no longer counted as unemployed increased 37.8 percent between October 2008 and October 2010. The number of students also increased 17.3 percent as people chose to go back

As the cost of living increases and unemployment remains high, more and more Canadians rely on Food Banks.



to school or stay in school to avoid an unfriendly hiring climate. Young people have been particularly impacted by unemployment, with the official youth unemployment

rate at 14.1 percent in October 2011. However, youth participation in the labour force has dropped
See Recovery story? on page 2

Reformed two-kingdom doctrine?

Timothy P. Palmer

What is the kingdom of God? Is the kingdom of God only the church? How wide is the lordship of Christ? Does Jesus reign only over the church?

These are questions raised by David VanDrunen in his new book, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* (Eerdmans, 2010). In this book the author insists that the two-kingdom doctrine is authentic Reformed theology. So what is the two-kingdom doctrine?

The two-kingdom doctrine originated with Martin Luther. His intention was to create a clear separation between church and state. Luther posits two kingdoms of God outside the kingdom of Satan. The kingdom of God is the church; the kingdom of the world is the state. Jesus rules over the



Does Reformed theology advocate a separation of church and state?

church or the kingdom of God, but *Jesus does not rule over the state or the kingdom of the world.* Luther wrote in his "Temporal Authority": "Christ is King and Lord in the kingdom of God," but "Christ's

government does not extend over all people."

For Luther, the church is the kingdom of God where Christ rules by his Word and Spirit. Individual Christians belong in the kingdom of God. There they practice love and non-violence as laid out in the Sermon on the Mount. For Luther, the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Christ is "spiritual." The state, on the other hand, is the secular kingdom of the world where law and justice prevail.

In his lectures on the Sermon on the Mount, Luther develops this idea. Luther says, "We must not drag Christ's words into the law books or into the secular government ... *With the secular area Christ has nothing to do.*" Luther says that a prince may be a Christian, "but *he must not rule as a Christian* ... his office or

his principdom does not involve his Christianity." Luther asks the ruler: "Do you want to know what your duty is as a prince or a judge or a lord or a lady, with people under you? You do not have to ask Christ about your duty. Ask the imperial or territorial law."

This is a very brief summary of Luther's two-kingdom doctrine. The doctrine is useful in distinguishing church and state. But the two-kingdom doctrine posits a sacred-secular dualism. Life in the church is sacred; life outside the church is secular. Christ rules in the church, but Christ does not rule outside the church. The kingdom of God is in the church, but not outside it.

Given this separation, it is surprising that VanDrunen's book talks incessantly of a "Reformed
See Doctrine on page 3

Without intentional action on the part of Canadian governments, [vulnerable] Canadians will not experience the benefits of recovery.

News

Palestine's plea for recognition

Brent van Staalduinen

As I write this, the Palestinian Authority (PA) is currently embroiled in efforts to make Palestine a full member state of the United Nations. The UN Security Council met to discuss this matter on Nov. 11, but didn't achieve the consensus required to allow Palestine's application to be voted on by the General Assembly. Even if it comes to a vote, however, the United States has pledged to veto the proposal and Palestine's bid for UN membership will amount to little more than a symbolic effort to put the plight of Palestinians in the world's spotlight.

Soon Palestine's bold manoeuvre will fade into just another chapter in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The world will go back to normal, and people will shrug their shoulders, feeling badly but not really doing anything. Israel will speed up its efforts to bully and evict people from long-held land. America and its allies will threaten to keep much-needed money from UNESCO. And, worst of all, we Christians will support Israel and the mistreatment of Palestinians will carry on. It is an irrefutable truth that Israel is mistreating the Palestinians within its borders. By supporting Israel, we support that mistreatment.

I can hear the political-social objections now: The UN legally divided Israel in 1947; Israel has the right to defend itself; Islamic fundamentalists are ruining the peace process; Hamas and the PA are woefully incapable of governance; Palestinians and other Islamic nations refuse to acknowledge that Israel has the right to exist, and so on.

Christians, meanwhile, add their own arguments to the mix. We cite passages from Ezekiel and quote the prophets, speaking about Israel of the Bible on equal terms to Israel of 2011. We mix in discussions of Judaism's siege by Islam, and the watering down of religion. We speak of our religious forefathers and Jerusalem and the tearing down and building up of God's people.

But none of those things can justify how Israel is treating the Palestinians. And yet a contingent of Christendom from

Evangelicals to Catholics and every shade in between publicly and vehemently support Israel's right to exist, in the media, on the web and from pulpits, all the while remaining silent about the intentional impoverishment and imprisonment of millions.

We must clearly, and loudly, decry the human rights tragedy that is happening in Palestine and keep ourselves from holding up Israel based on misguided biblical interpretation and religious xenophobia.

We need to clearly and carefully distinguish between the Israel of the Bible, God's pre-Christ chosen people, and the political entity of the state of Israel today. Contrary to what is publicly preached and refrained, they are not the same – Christ has come, and while Jews will always occupy a place in the history of Christianity, they are no longer God's chosen people. They may worship the same God, but we cannot use that as a reason to hold them higher than any of God's other children who have not accepted Christ.

And this assumes that Israel today is being built by Jewish – and I use the term on religious grounds, rather than the commonly-adopted generic label for Israeli citizens – interests and endeavours. It is not. Despite Hebrew being a national language and David's star decorating the national flag, Israel is, like our own nation, becoming increasingly secular, and decisions about borders and settlements are more and more difficult to justify based on a misguided sense of scriptural entitlement.

Nor can we try to justify the 1947 borders, or the lands gained/lost in the various aggressions and defences since then, as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. If Christ's message is the way to salvation, then there is no justification for the marginalization and impoverishment of people who had occupied the lands after the Diaspora – Christ did not come to conquer but to save, and we must see any Jewish return to Palestine in the same light. Even Jerusalem, divided or not, cannot be assessed under the same pretences – Muslims must be allowed to move and worship as freely



Palestine's bid for recognition by the UN is mainly a symbolic gesture.

as we expect to wherever we are.

Most of all, we are absolutely mandated by scripture to stand up for the rights of Palestinians who are being mistreated in Israel. We Christians have historically acted to protect innocent people – albeit imperfectly – and have even gone so far as to go to war to do so. We must use the media, our political strength and our physical presence to hold the state of Israel to account in no less vigorous fashion than we have done for others.

The Palestinians are not in a position to govern themselves, so their plea for UN membership is unrealistic. But still, we have to do a better job of listening to them, whether their gestures are symbolic or not. Right now, symbolism might be all they have – it is difficult to hope for more when you are malnourished, beaten and chained to the ground.

Brent van Staalduinen is a novelist and freelance writer from Hamilton, Ontario. More of his work and contact information can be found at brentvanstaalduinen.com.



Recovery story? *continued*

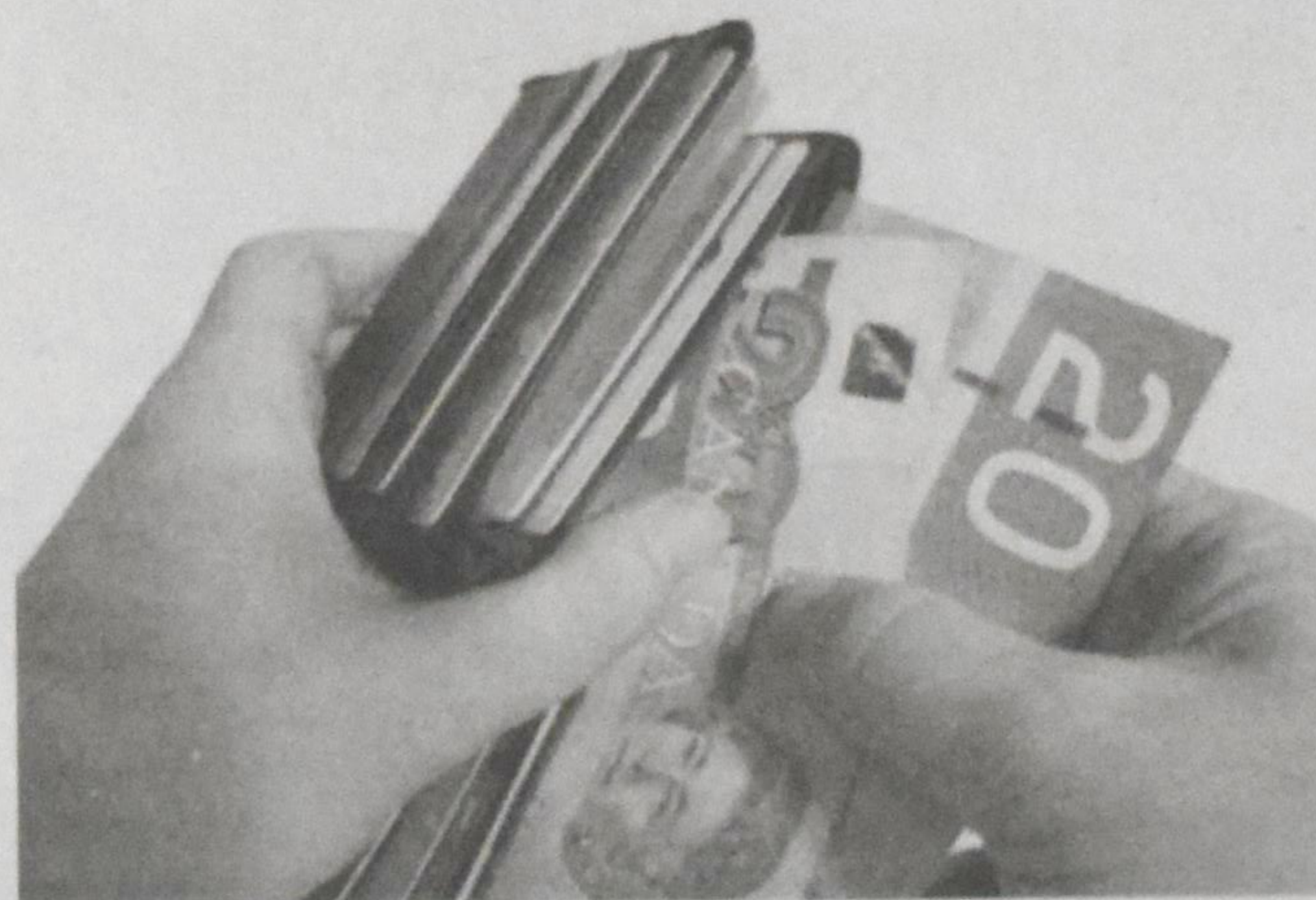
nearly three percentage points since 2008, meaning that youth unemployment is actually higher than that.

Those who lose their jobs need to turn to Employment Insurance, but EI has turned out to be completely inadequate. While at the peak of the recession just over half of the unemployed were receiving benefits, the coverage rate has now declined to 42 percent of unemployed Canadians in May 2011, which is below the pre-recession rate. The number of unemployed Canadians not receiving EI has been rising in 2011, despite the fact that unemployment has been falling. Over 500,000 Canadians also exhausted their benefits in 2009 and 2010 without finding new work.

As a result of EI's inadequacies, social assistance caseloads have increased dramatically across the country. In Alberta (46 percent), Ontario (27.91 percent) and BC (23.29 percent), the increases since 2008 have been particularly high, but all 10 provinces have experienced an increase. Quebec is the lone province to have seen a decline in welfare caseloads between 2009 and 2010. The recession's full impact may not have been experienced yet, as seven out of nine provinces with available data witnessed their peak caseload since October 2008 in 2011.

Rising costs

Meanwhile, Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet on the poverty income of EI, social assistance benefits or wages of a part-time job have been confronted with



In 2010 the average household debt in Canada rose above \$100,000 per household.

rising energy costs and average rents that have increased by more than the rate of inflation. The increasing strain of precarious or poverty incomes on Canadian households can be seen in rising debt levels and mortgage arrears. The average debt load per household in Canada reached record levels in 2010, rising above \$100,000 per household and equaling 150 percent of disposable income. The number of mortgages that are in arrears by three months or more increased by more than 52 percent during the recession, and is still 49 percent higher than before the recession began.

Perhaps the best indicator of economic strain is food

bank use, which reached record levels in 2010. The number of food bank users increased 28 percent between 2008 and 2010, reaching a new record high. The number barely edged down in 2011, highlighting the ongoing vulnerability of many Canadian families.

Without intentional action on the part of Canadian governments, these Canadians will not experience the benefits of recovery. The recession significantly increased poverty in Canada, which had been at a record low in 2007. Since the recession ended the situation has not gotten any better for poor Canadians. We need deliberate action to reduce poverty and unemployment in Canada. Without a poverty elimination strategy, we will simply see the poverty rate continue to rise and fall along with the economic cycle, without making any progress towards eliminating poverty.

The good news is that action on poverty will bring economic growth. The Department of Finance estimates that a \$1 billion investment in low income Canadians will create a \$1.7 billion boost to GDP. This is greater than the return on almost any other investment. We can't afford to leave any Canadians behind if we want a good news recovery story for Canada.

Chandra Pasma is an Ottawa-based policy analyst with a passion for poverty eradication.



News

From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom



When we think of Jesus' parable about the sowing of seeds (Matt. 13), we usually interpret it as Jesus did in his explanation to his disciples: the seeds are God's Word, and the various surfaces onto which the seeds fall (some becoming more fruitful than others) are various human hearts. To me this parable also has implications for how we as God's church look at research activity. It suggests a way to approach those who explore difficult questions. I think it can also give us space to grow and permit us to face squarely some of the challenges of this age.

Researchers, scholars and scientists are charged with being the community's scouts by exploring new terrain to see what is out there. They are not doing their job if they stay only in well-travelled country. Like the seed scattered by the sower, they go to many places, some profitable, some less fruitful. Only by exploring the terrain can they determine what is out there and where dangers and blessings can be found.

Although I know nothing about current mechanised farming, I imagine that it is impossible to fully sow a field by hand without scattering seed on its rocky and unproductive edges. If farmers were to ensure that seed falls only on rich soil, they would have to sow only in the centre of the field and large areas of it would remain unplanted. Seeds have to be thrown everywhere in the field and by their random scattering are also distributed in places that are not productive.

Thus it is with research. Sometimes academic exploration is very profitable and bears much fruit. It opens up an aspect of God's world or revelation that has been lost or undiscovered, and gives us a new way of understanding God, his creation and each other. Other times research does not grow at all, or it may look promising but on further exploration prove to be a dead end. Unless we give research "scouts" space to explore novel ideas and opportunity to demonstrate their potential, their ideas will be like the seed that falls near the road and is eaten

Research, sowing seeds and the possibility of being wrong



Academic research is like the parable of sower: some seeds fall on fertile ground while others come to nothing.

by the birds.

Think, for example, of the current understanding of multiple sclerosis and venous insufficiency in the head and neck. Researchers are exploring new ground by asking if venous blockages result in multiple sclerosis. It is not yet clear if this theory will turn out to be an advance or a dead end.

I am sure that in five years we will know whether correcting venous insufficiency in the head truly helps the victims of this devastating disorder. With other areas of scholarship it takes more time – more experiments, more clinical trials – to determine if the plants are going to be fruitful. In this case it is like trees that need time to mature and grow over multiple seasons.

We as a Christian community need to give our researchers and scholars room to explore the mysteries of

God's general and special revelation. They need time and resources to explore for us research terrain that is not well travelled, unlike paved highways with rest stops every 100 kilometres. Exploring strange and new terrain is difficult and lonely work that sometimes requires considerable time and many false paths before the best route becomes evident and fruitful land is found. Plants that are just growing from seeds are equally vulnerable; it is not clear until much later whether they will bear fruit, whether they will die in the noon sun or whether they will start growing among thistles only to be choked out. One step on a path does not tell us much. We need to give ideas and research an opportunity to grow and reach the fruit-bearing stage. In the current world of research one or two papers may just open a topic; they may just reveal new territory that has yet to be explored.

I am very disappointed that sometimes in our Christian community, after one "controversial" article (effectively a tiny seedling showing its head above ground), researchers are forced to retrace their footsteps and return to the well-travelled highways. It is a loss for our whole Christian community, and we are all going to be hungrier for it.

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is a member of Waterloo CRC, Chair of the Psychology Department at Wilfrid Laurier University, and has received five years of research funding from the government.

Doctrine *continued*

two kingdoms doctrine." For him, this is the dominant Reformed social theology.

VanDrunen claims that Calvin holds to the two-kingdom doctrine. Incredibly, though, he puts Abraham Kuyper in this same camp. He then judges every Reformed theologian as to whether he or she is faithful to this alleged "Reformed two kingdoms doctrine." Thus Henry Stob, Neal Plantinga, Al Wolters, Craig Bartholomew, Michael Goheen and even, institutionally-speaking, Reformed universities such as Calvin, Redeemer, and Dordt all fall short of this two-kingdom ideal because they confess the kingship of Christ in all of life.

But is there really such a Reformed two-kingdom doctrine? Possibly some form of such a doctrine can be found in the theology of Calvin. But Calvin broke with Luther in some vital areas. In the end, though, is Calvin or Scripture the final norm of Reformed theology? Reformed theology is always reforming. Our final norm is Scripture, not John Calvin.

However, Calvin did point theology in a different direction than Luther. Unlike Luther, Calvin taught the sovereignty of God and the lordship of Christ over all of life. Others after Calvin developed this theology in a more holistic fashion.

In the end it is Scripture that is our final authority. Scripture is kingdom theology from the start to the finish. My Old Testament teacher, John Stek, claimed that all of

biblical theology from Genesis to Revelation is kingdom theology. God's rule extends from creation to the final consummation. The theology of Jesus is also kingdom theology. The kingdom of God in Scripture is found in all of life. It is this theology of the kingdom that should define Reformed theology.

And so VanDrunen's *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* is a sad book. For this Westminster Seminary professor, the kingdom of God is restricted to the church. (Is this the theology of Westminster Seminary?) If the kingdom of God is found only in the church, then the rest of creation suddenly becomes insignificant. This problem will be explored further in a follow-up article, which will run in the Dec. 12 CC.

(References and further reading can be found in "Calvin the Transformationist and the Kingship of Christ, *Pro Rege* [March 2007] and "The Two-Kingdom Doctrine," *Pro Rege* [March 2009], available on-line at "Dordt College Pro Rege.")

Dr. Timothy Palmer teaches at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, and is seconded to TCNN by Christian Reformed World Missions.



Worried about the safety of your investments?

Choosing the right organization to build and manage your financial plan requires careful consideration. Choose a company with a firm commitment to prudent business practices, comprehensive supervision and client privacy. Investors Group has been a trusted choice for the protection and growth of investments for over 80 years.

Learn why at www.investorsgroup.com/strength or call me for your copy of "The strength and security of Investors Group".

TM/Trademarks owned by ICM Financial Inc. and licensed to its subsidiary corporations. MPT144 (10/2007)



CLARENCE WEIMA CFP
Senior Financial Consultant
clarence.weima@investorsgroup.com
(519) 673-4544 ext. 209
1-800-488-9817 (Toll Free 24 hrs)

The Plan
by **Investors Group**

Investors Group Financial Services Inc.

AMSTERDAM 2012

Via Air Transat

FANTASTIC SPRING PRICES

BOOK Now!

Fabulous Winter & European River
Cruise deals on now!

VERSTRAETE TRAVEL & CRUISES

2 offices to serve you:

36 Secord Dr.
St. Catharines ON
905-934-4414
1-800-405-6088
niagara@verstraete.com

14845 Yonge Str.
Aurora ON
416-969-8100
1-800-565-9267
aurora@verstraete.com



Editorials

Pornography and the church



Denise Neutel

We rarely speak of sexual impurity and sexual sin in our churches, and I'm not sure we ever did. Perhaps these topics were broached, but I think this was often done in an accusatory way, looking at the sexual sinner as a deviant. Sexual sin is a topic that seems to be sidestepped routinely or even considered taboo. Yet, the Bible does not shy away from tackling it; in fact, its pages are replete with discussions and dealings of sexual sin and impurity. I find the church's lack of leadership in this area rather unfortunate. Sexual impurity is a pretty easy sin to hide, often done furtively, on the sly, in the dark; and in the age of the internet, it is often done alone.

The lack of clear teaching on this subject within the church leaves people confused about what is acceptable, how far they are allowed to go and what they are allowed to look at. More than likely, pastors and other church leaders do not feel they should be the ones to admonish, correct or teach those of us in the pews who might be engaged in sexual sin, as they themselves may be in the grip of some kind of sexual impurity.

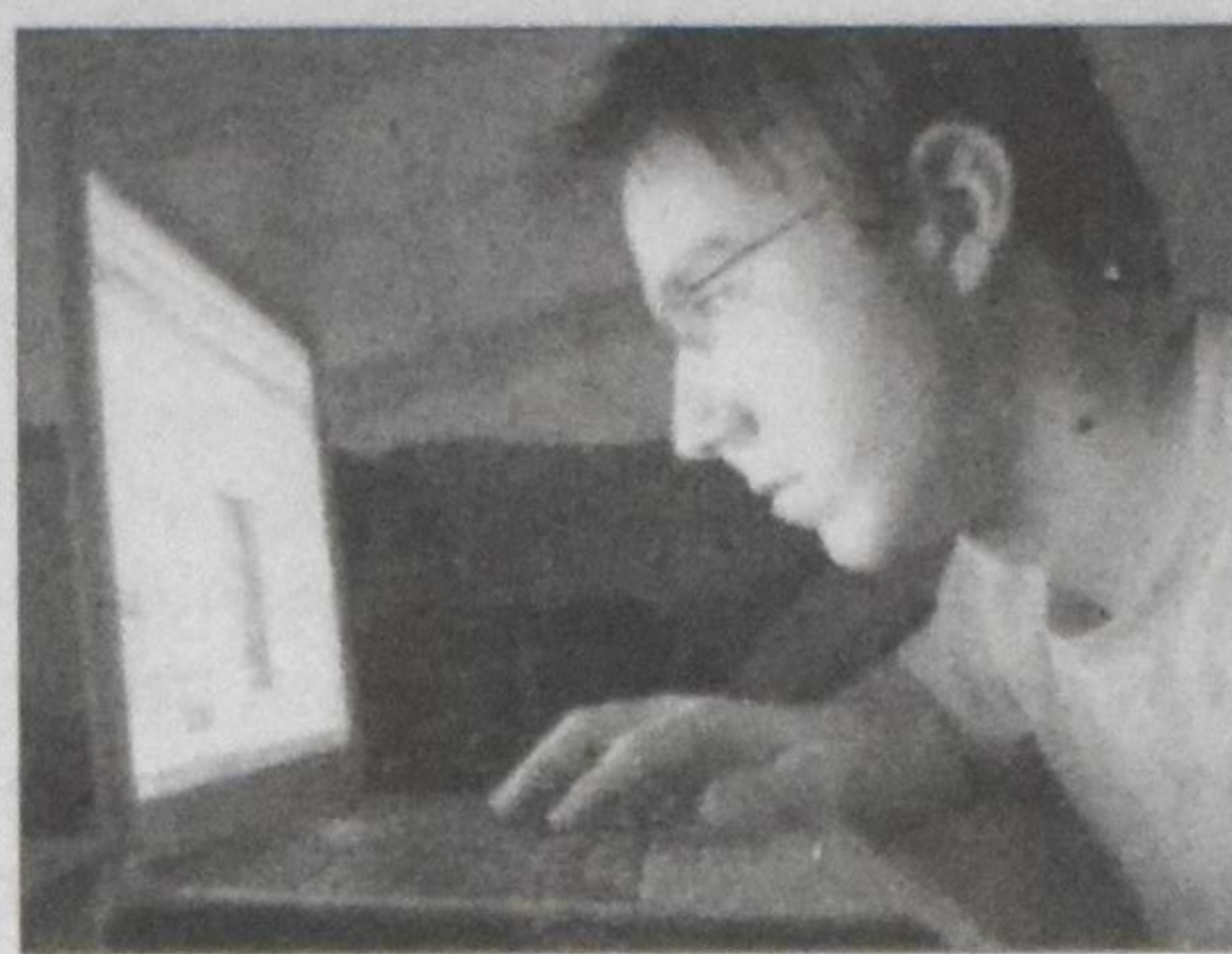
What is never spoken of in the church is the effect that pornography has on today's society, family and, yes, the church. Pornography is not just the commoditization of sex; it is also the commoditization of women and children. It causes the viewer to be lulled into thinking that they are not harming anyone since they are not physically partaking in a sexual act. But all pornography is part of a brutal commercial sex industry. It is prostitution and is closely related to human sex trafficking.

The statistics are mind-boggling:

- The "Adult Industry" is a \$13 billion a year industry, with the internet bringing in about \$3 billion of that.
- 82 percent of college men and 52 percent of college women said they had been exposed to pornography by age 14 in a 2009 college survey.
- 91 percent of men raised in Christian homes were exposed to pornography while growing up (compared to 98 percent in non-Christian homes), a 1994 survey showed.
- 54 percent of over 1000 pastors surveyed in 2002 said they had viewed internet pornography within the last year, and 30 percent of those said they had viewed it within the last 30 days before the survey was taken.
- 50 percent of all Christian men and 20 percent of all Christian women are addicted to pornography as shown in an August 2006 survey reported by ChristiaNet.
- 56 percent of divorces in the US involve one party having "an obsessive interest in pornographic websites" as reported by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.
- 93 percent of boys and 62 percent of girls have been exposed to internet porn before the age of 18, shows another 2009 study.

Perhaps another reason churches are unwilling to address this subject is the fact that we no longer hold each other accountable, don't see the value in transparency and don't want to be vulnerable with each other? What, then, is the value of the community of Christ if we cannot be made strong in our weakness, especially a weakness that is as destructive to relationships as this is?

Sexual sin is an uncomfortable subject, no question, but where is a person to turn when having such a struggle? Where are they to find people whom they can confide in, seek counsel from, be



In the age of the internet, pornography is easy to access and easy to hide.

mentored by? Are we to leave this type of brokenness to be fixed by secular society? Do we look at it with an attitude of "it's not my problem so don't bother me with it?"

Of course it is our problem. We need to own sexual sin, confront it and ask Jesus to heal it, the Holy Spirit to cover it and the Father to forgive it.

This Sunday you are probably going to be sitting near someone suffering from some form of sexual sin. You may hear them speak from the front of the church. Maybe it is you. Isn't it time we start bringing this issue out of the darkness and into the light? ➤

Denise Neutel (dneutel@hotmail.com) is a wife and a mother of two working as a medical laboratory technologist at McMaster University. She lives in Ancaster, Ontario. Statistics are courtesy of "Parenting the Internet Generation" and "Porn in the Pews," Covenant Eyes, 2010. Please see the CC website for further reading.

Sex and humour



Bert Witvoet

"Sex is good," I said to about 100 black students crowded into one classroom in a South African school. They cheered. I knew why. They thought I had given them permission to freely engage in sexual activity. "Sex is good," I said again, "sex is very good . . . within marriage." They laughed, knowing that an old guy like me would put the brake on somewhere. Whenever I have the occasion to tell students about sex, I make sure it is done lightheartedly and with a bit of humour to avoid puritanical judgmentalism.

I had been asked by the principal of the school to address students from grade 6 to 12 on the topic of sexuality. He had heard that I had given a lesson on that somewhere else. Most teachers in these schools do not find it easy to talk about sex. Sex is a taboo subject in black schools, but it is not a taboo practice. Dating among South African teenagers often includes sexual activity. Are they different this way from their Western counterparts? Yes and no. In our society dating practices are better established and often have a social activity linked to them. In rural South Africa there are far fewer activities that can be incorporated into dating. However, it would be naïve to think that in our society casual extra-marital sex does not frequently take place. Virginity is not considered a high ideal in either Africa or the West, although we like to keep up pretences.

In South Africa, casual sex brings along with it a lot of risk. After I had given my lecture, the principal addressed the students with a dire warning. He advised them to visit the cemetery one or two kilometres down the road. "Look at the grave stones," he said. "Look at the ages of the buried people. You will find that most of them are young people; some are your age. They died of AIDS."

So much for my attempt at humour. I had not used AIDS as a weapon in my lecture, though I did make the point that if everyone practiced only marital sex there would be no epidemic of AIDS in the world. My lecture focused more on the creational purpose of sex and on the need to follow God's intentions for a happy and fulfilling life. I wanted these students to learn the ways of the Kingdom of God also in this area of their lives. Sexual faithfulness is first of all a spiritual issue before it is a medical one. But the principal had a much more pragmatic and urgent purpose in mind. He wanted these students to survive into adulthood.

These students don't always have good role models. Polygamy is legal in South Africa, but having an extra-marital affair is not unusual either. A female principal I know in one of the black schools we visit did not want to get married because she feared contracting a venereal disease. Within the context of the AIDS epidemic in South Africa, social mores do not favour the women, nor the men, come to think of it.

The greatest tragedy when it comes to sex is that it gets separated from love and commitment. As the lyrics of a pop song go, "I'm not in love, but the sex is good." Either the composer thinks love is not needed or sex is a shortcut to love. But who among us is clean? I once wrote a song about David and Bathsheba that didn't make it into the Psalter Hymnal for very good reasons. It goes like this:

King David's Fling

*In spring, a young ruler's affection
turns to war and to border protection.
But the slayer of the giant of Gath,
watched Bathsheba take a bath,
and promptly succumbed to his erection.*

*Bathsheba, who'd just started her cycle,
conceived before you can say Michael.
She sent word to the king
who regretted his fling.
But adultery you can never recycle.*

*King David then said to Uriah,
Go home to Bathsheba and say "Hi yah."
Uriah said, "No way,
My men cannot play."
So David made him a pariah.
(That was before pro-choice took off in Canaan.)*

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to engage creatively in critical Christian journalism, connecting Christians with a network of culturally savvy partners in faith for the purpose of inspiring all to participate in God's renewing work within his fallen creation.

EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Interim Editor: Michael Burna editor@christiancourier.ca
Features Editor: Cathy Smith cathy@christiancourier.ca
Church Page Editor: Marian Van Til marianvantil@roadrunner.com
Review Editor: Nick Schuurman reviews@christiancourier.ca
Contributing Editor: Bert Witvoet bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca
Contributing Editor: Angela Reitsma Bick angela@christian.ca
Admin/Bus.ads/Web: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca
Circulation/Fam.ads: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca

The publication of comments, opinions or advertising does not imply agreement or endorsement by Christian Courier or the publisher. Please contact circulation if you cannot afford the subscription price but want to receive Christian Courier.

The paper is published the second & fourth Mondays of the month.

Christian Courier

5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1

Tel: 905-682-8311; 1-800-969-4838

Web site: christiancourier.ca

We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

Canada

Letters

Jack Layton's identity

Judging from the two letters to the editor in the November 14 issue of CC, which responded to my earlier letter regarding Jack Layton (October 10 issue), I need to clarify my position. Letter writers Ralph Koops and John Kamphof took my comments further than I intended, and John Kamphof disagrees with me.

I said that Jack Layton was not a Christian. Why? My first clue was that Rev. Hawkes told his audience at the funeral of Layton that he was wearing his academic gown instead of his clerical gown in deference to Jack Layton. What does that tell us?

The term "Christian" is not a medal that we pin on a person for good behaviour. Rather, it's an identity statement that tells us that a person is an intentional follower of Christ, or wants to be known as such. Jack Layton never identified himself that way. So when I say he was not a Christian, I'm not judging him. I am simply saying that he never claimed to be a Christian. Neither did he claim to be a Muslim, a Hindu, or a Buddhist. Judging by his words and actions, I would say he was a humanist.

Secondly, I never said that Jack Layton did not go to heaven. I agree with Ralph Koops that that's up to God. But by the same token why should we say that he *did* go to heaven, as Rev. Hawkes and Brian Walsh suggested? Both referred to the parable of the sheep and the goats, as does John Kamphof. The question, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you?" does not signify that those who took care of the poor in the parable didn't know Jesus, but that they didn't keep a record of their compassionate actions. Besides, should we not use the Reformed exegetical principle of interpreting the parable by looking at the context of Jesus' total ministry and mission? Visiting someone in prison and caring for the poor does not automatically unlock the gates of heaven. Instead, we read, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Romans 10:10). That should be our message to the world, not idle speculation about someone's ultimate destiny.

Bert Witvoet
St. Catharines, Ont.

Don't judge a book by its cover

I feel I need to speak up in response to Cathy Smith's "The mystic in the Dutch library" (CC Sept. 26). While I realize this was not the point of the article, Smith's sweeping put down of Dutch novels and the somewhat mocking picture of little old ladies reading these supposed love stories offends me on behalf of the authors and readers of many very good books. Two things spring to mind:

We don't judge a book by its cover. One of my favourite novels, a profound study of American racism in the 1950s, has an embarrassingly steamy cover picture. The only steam that book raised was my ire at the injustices it depicts. So the Dutch books with the trendy boy-meets-girl cover picture often have that as a very minor subplot in an insightful Christian family novel.

Perhaps part of the misunderstanding comes from the word "roman" which is simply Dutch for "novel," not necessarily love stories. I own a number of excellent Dutch Christian novels that show insight into the many situations that were common in the history of the Netherlands – anti-Semitism, church conflict and the bigotry surrounding it, war experiences, etc. So please don't put down what you don't know, or its reader.

Coby Veenstra
St. Catharines, Ont.

Sex and humour *continued*

*Then Nathan told David a story
The point of it was accusatory.
King David fessed up,
He sure had messed up,
Not everything turns out honky dory.*

*But God used this strange provocation
To bring about a grandiose reconciliation.
The child could not survive.
But the second, Solomon, would thrive,
And his descendant would bring us salvation.*

Maybe you think that humour destroys the sacredness of life, of sex? Not in my Shaw Festival neck of the woods. I hold with George Bernard when he wrote, "When a thing is funny, search it carefully for a hidden truth." I see in the David and Bathsheba salvation story God's immense sense of humour. One way to demythologize our strange preoccupation with sex is to poke fun at it while searching out God's way through repentance.

*Bert Witvoet practices monogamy, but, like most men,
has to be careful what his little eyes see. He lives in St. Catharines, Ont.*

Age bias?

In the article "A new generation of giving" by Bethany Van Lingen (CC Nov. 14) the age of CRWRC e-communications specialist Christina DeJong is given. Is there any reason why her age is included? I do not see how knowing her age adds anything to the information presented. Her position is important but not her age.

The same applies to Katherine Winchester, Shirley Roy, Reed Baker and Douglas Plank. Perhaps the journalism school at Ryerson University requires this information be included in articles for publication, but I do not see how its adds any value for the readers of CC.

From a senior citizen, whose age does not add anything to this letter either.

John Hofstee
Guelph, Ont.

"Rebuke the discerning, and they will gain knowledge."

– Proverbs 19:25

Have something to say about one of our articles?

Send a letter to editor@christiancourier.ca and be part of the conversation.



Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association

Canada Mail:

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40009999
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
CHRISTIAN COURIER
5 JOANNA DR
ST. CATHARINES ON L2N 1V1
email: subscriptions@christiancourier.ca

U.S. Mail:

Christian Courier (USPS 518-090)
Second-class postage paid at
Lewiston NY
Postmaster: send address changes
to: Christian Courier, Box 110
Lewiston NY 14092

Subscriptions:

Canada and USA

Overseas

one yr. (24 issues)

\$52.00

\$100

two yrs. (48 issues)

\$100.00

Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Tuesday, 9 a.m. (13 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site www.christiancourier.ca for more details. (ISSN 1192-3415) Published second and fourth Mondays of the month.

Address all correspondence to: 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1

Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838

e-mail: Advertising: ads@christiancourier.ca

Subscriptions: subscriptions@christiancourier.ca

PRINTED IN CANADA



News

Britain: Muslims and Roman Catholics will meet to protect marriage

GLASGOW, Scotland (TCI) – Muslim and Roman Catholic leaders in Scotland are to hold a meeting to discuss their shared concerns about the Scottish government's plans to redefine marriage for the sake of same-sex couples. Bashir Maan, spokesperson for Glasgow Central Mosque – the largest in Scotland – has confirmed that senior figures from both groups will meet to discuss a joint response to the contentious plans.

The mosque's leader has also written to First Minister Alex Salmond urging him to think again before proceeding with the "very dangerous legislation."

The Scottish government is currently holding a consultation on whether to rewrite the definition of marriage. The consultation will finish in December.

Earlier this month Bashir Maan revealed Glasgow Central Mosque's plans to meet with leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, saying, "We will talk about how we can try to influence the government. We don't want them to go ahead with this. Civil partnerships are enough. Why go further and offend people?"

Also earlier this month, Mohammed Tufail Shaheen, president of Glasgow Central Mosque, wrote to First Minister Salmond. "Passing this legislation would further

encourage homosexuality and increase the number of same-sex marriages. If this trend continues, what would become of our society?" he wrote.

In October Sir Tom Farmer, the high-profile founder of Kwik-Fit and a Scottish National Party (SNP) donor, criticized the party's plans to redefine marriage. The 71-year-old Farmer said the Scottish Government had "alienated" itself from "large parts of the population." He added, "Most people would see a marriage as being between two of the opposite sexes, the male and the female. One of the main important areas of marriage is the creation of children and the family life."

Gordon Wilson, who led the Scottish National Party from 1979 to 1990, called for a referendum to be held on the issue.

In September Cardinal Keith O'Brien, head of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, warned that redefining marriage would lead to homosexual behaviour being normalized in the nation's schools. "Any attempt to redefine marriage is a direct attack on a foundational building block of society and will be strenuously opposed," he said. "The view of the Church is clear. No government can rewrite human nature; the family and marriage existed before the state and are built on the union between a man and a woman." ➤

U.S.: A majority of Democrats 'seldom or never' go to church, Gallup poll finds

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CWN) – A majority of Americans who vote Democratic say they seldom or never go to church, according to Gallup data published earlier this month. On the other hand, Americans who identified themselves as Republicans are more likely than the general American population to attend church services regularly.

Among Republicans, 43 percent reported attending church weekly or almost weekly, while another 20 percent attend at least monthly. Republican voters were also more likely to be married and to live in households with higher incomes. For the overall population, 33 percent go to church weekly and 20 percent attend monthly. Among Democrats the figures drop to 27 percent and 20 percent, with a 52 percent majority saying that they rarely or never go to church.

The results are based Gallup's daily tracking polls conducted between June 1 and August 31 of this year.

When asked by Gallup what their religious denomination

was, 19 percent of Democrats said they had none, while only nine percent of Republicans said they belonged to no religious denomination.

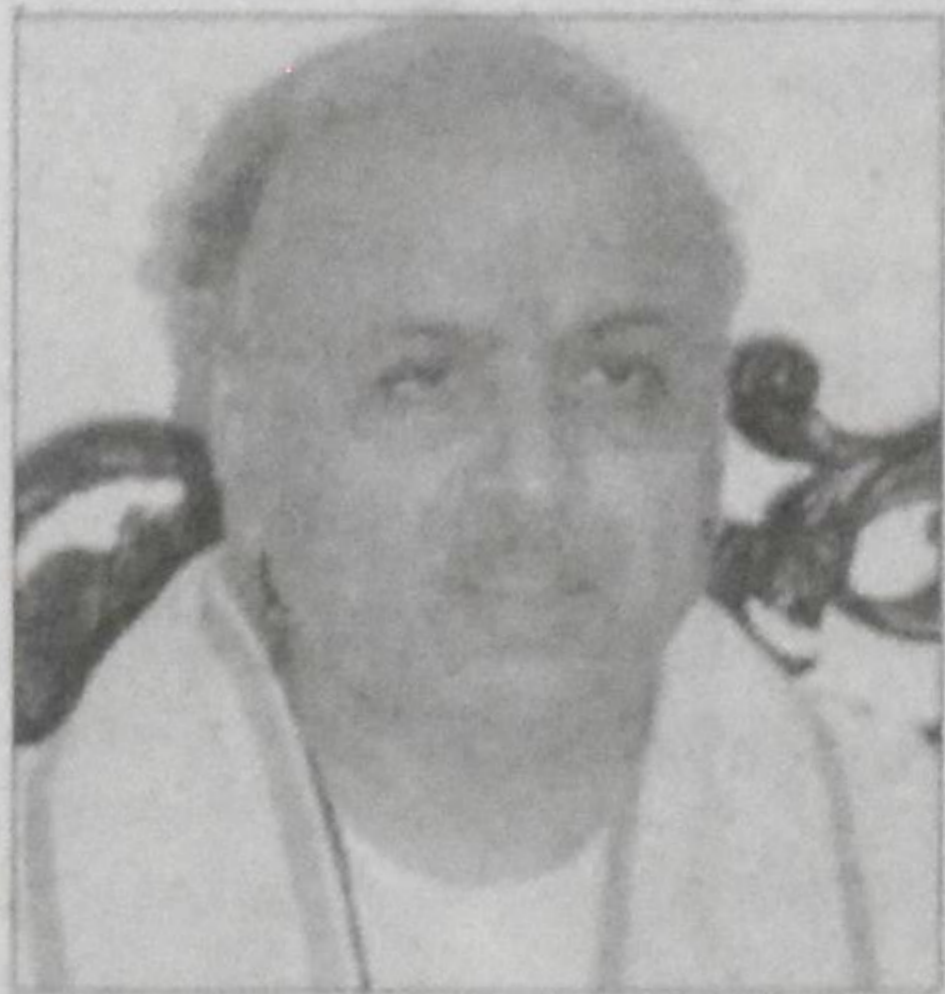
Democrats are less religious than the typical American and Republicans are more religious, according to Gallup's data. Overall, 15 percent of Americans told Gallup they had no religious denomination. Also, overall, 46 percent of Americans told Gallup they seldom or never go to church, while 20 percent said they go to church nearly weekly or monthly, and 33 percent said they go weekly.

Gallup defines "Democrats" in its polling analysis as "those who either identify as Democrats or who identify as independents but say they lean toward the Democratic Party." Similarly, it defines "Republicans" as "those who either identify as Republicans, or who identify as independents but say they lean toward the Republican Party." ➤

India: Hindu leader wants death penalty for conversion

MUMBAI, India (AsiaNews) – A prominent Hindu nationalist leader has called for the beheading of missionaries for anyone who attempts to convert Hindus to another religion.

Praveen Togadia, secretary general of the Hindu extremist group Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), made the demand when he addressed the Akhil Bharatiya Dharmaprasar Karyakarta Sammelan, a three-day event in Ahmadabad, in which he also called for changes to the Indian constitution.



Father Cedric Prakash, the Jesuit director of a human-rights center, observed that such intolerance is not unusual in India today. But Togadia's statement is at odds with India's traditional commitment to inter-religious harmony, said Prakash. "His words are against the spirit and the freedom enshrined in the Constitution of India, which guarantees every citizen the right to preach, practice and propagate his/her religion and, for that matter, choose his/her religion."

Togadia's "hate propaganda has so often resulted in

considerable violence against India's Muslim, Christian and Dalit minorities," said Sajan K George, president of the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC). "Violence and other abuses against marginalized groups in India are part of a concerted campaign of these Hinduvta organizations – whose leadership is dominated by upper-caste Hindus – to promote and exploit communal tensions in order to retain political and economic power," he explained.

Togadia "has long been in favour of discriminatory measures against other religions. He has long been advocating anti-conversion legislation in all states to curb conversion from Hinduism to Christianity," George said. But now, Togadia has begun to systematically distribute *trishuls*, warning brochures whose clever rhetoric tells Hindus to "beware" of the imminent danger and get ready for violence. For the GCIC president, *trishuls* are "a brazen attempt to militarize society under the garb of a religious programme."

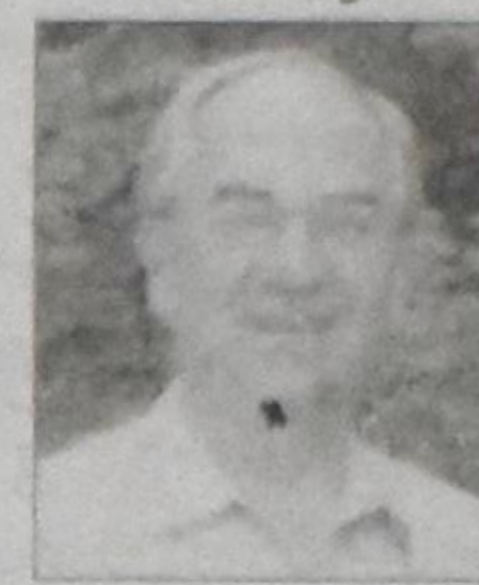
Recently, Togadia opposed the Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence, a bill drafted by the National Advisory Council (NAC). If enacted the bill would, in Togadia's words, "oppress" Hindus, and "reduce them to second class citizens by making them into a criminal tribe." ➤

CRC taskforce looks at ways to improve church structure, culture

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRCNA) – Christian Reformed Church members, ministry workers and employees are being asked to play a role in helping the denomination re-shape its structure and culture so that it can better address the changing religious landscape in the 21st century North America.

The Task Force Reviewing Culture and Structure, a 10-member group established by Synod 2011, is soliciting the input. "We'd like to hear from the people outside the walls of denominational offices," says Rev. Joel Boot, interim executive director of the CRCNA.

Interested church members can read the task force team's mandate on a new website and can provide feedback – either by posting comments publicly in a special section of The [CRC] Network or sending comments confidentially using the online form provided. (The comment period ends on Nov. 30, just two days after the press date for this CC issue.)



But the task force must report on its work to Synod 2012, which will meet in June next year. Because of the time constraints, "the challenge is to determine how many people to involve," wrote Boot. "The answer is: as many denominational people as possible who are passionate about seeing God at work in the CRCNA, having a heart for listening to God and are willing to offer suggestions and/or concerns."

In establishing the task force, Synod 2011 directed it to recommend procedural changes, structural changes or cultural modifications that will strengthen "relationships and collaboration across the various bodies or agencies" in the church.

Simpler structure, better communication

The task force was told to consider new methods of governance and planning that would enhance services the denomination offers and "provide collaboration, transparency, accountability, diversity and cost-effectiveness" in a denomination that currently has a complex structure and a generally centralized management approach.

In addressing church "culture," the task force will be looking for ways "to enhance the work environment that fully incorporates diversity and the bi-national [Canadian/American] character of the CRCNA," as well as "develop a sustainability plan for the CRCNA to provide for systematic reviews to enable ongoing change, planning and improvement," says the website.

One of the first things the task force did was hold "listening events" in the CRC offices in Palos Heights, Illinois, Grand Rapids, Michigan and Burlington, Ontario. CRC structure was also discussed when the boards of most CRC agencies and educational institutions met in Grand Rapids in late September and early October.

From these meetings the task force gathered a substantial number of creative and helpful comments and suggestions. For instance, some people expressed the need for a more participative management style and purpose-driven collaboration. In relation to structure, there were mixed viewpoints on how best to address the nature of many boards. But a top priority expressed by all of the groups was the need for better communication.

The task force is made up of 10 members of the denomination. They are: Rev. Joel R. Boot, Interim Executive Director; Rev. Joel A. De Boer, Synod 2011 Advisory Team; Dr. R. Scott Greenway, Board of Trustees; Rev. Julius T. Medenblink, President, Calvin Theological Seminary; Peter Meerveld, CRCNA person with experience in organizational development and systems; Ida Mutoigo, director, CRWRC; Terry Vander Aa, CRCNA at large member; Jane Vander Haagen, CRCNA at large member; Katherine M. Vandergrift, Board of Trustees; Colin P. Watson, Sr., CRCNA at large member. ➤

News

Critics: Pakistan's schools promote intolerance

LAHORE, Pakistan (Agenzia Fides) – “The teaching of religious intolerance in schools is at the root of the rise of violent religious extremism in Pakistan, the weak religious freedom and national instability.” That’s what Dominican Father James Channan, OP, Director of the Dominican Peace Center in Lahore said in an interview with Fides. And Channan called for “urgent reform of the education system.”

His statement is echoed by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which has found that “in Pakistan, schools often serve as incubators of societal intolerance, especially toward religious minorities, with profoundly negative implications for religious freedom and security.”

Channan has been engaged in education and inter-religious dialogue for decades, and calls “completely correct” the U.S. Commission’s findings. He recalls that “the Islamization of textbooks in Pakistan began with the dictator Zia-ul-Haq and successive governments, including the current Pakistan People’s Party, have never had the strength to reform the education system because of the pressures and constraints imposed by Islamic extremist groups and religious parties. The government is weak: it does not have the capacity and does not intend to challenge them.”

Talibanization

Channan continued, “We were expecting reforms, but this did not happen, because in recent years the country has gradually Talibanized, with a loss for minorities and for democracy itself.” Channan notes that “in the textbooks used in public schools, intolerance is openly promoted. It is said that Islam is a superior religion and speaks negatively of other faiths. We are very concerned about

this approach: these ideas, propagated from primary schools to universities in the so-called ‘Islamic Studies’ but also social sciences disorient and manipulate the minds of young people.”

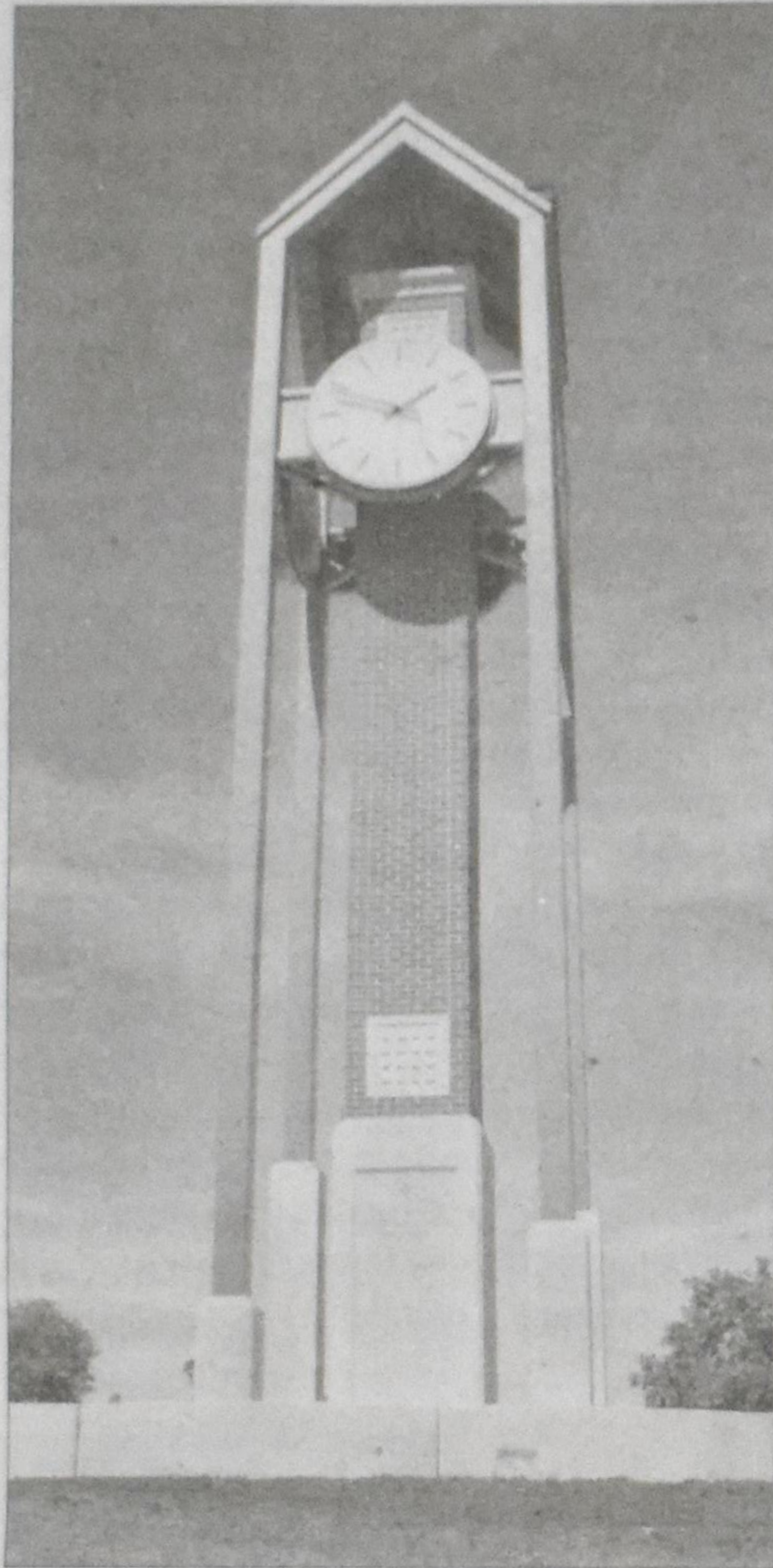
Many institutions and leaders working in the field of education have reported these problems publicly and have sent recommendations to the relevant federal organizations such as the Ministry of Education. The findings were accepted, Channan explains, but when it came to implementing revisions and modifications, the project was put aside. “This happened because of the strong influence on behalf of fundamentalist groups.”

As for the Christians in Pakistan, the priest concludes, “We have schools and colleges, but not Christian universities, which would be necessary. Many Muslim politicians have received education in Christian schools: the current Prime Minister Raza Gilani studied in the Dominican and Lasallian schools in Multan. Of course, more should be done for minorities, not only words but concrete actions, such as reforming the national education system.”



Fr. James Channan

Dordt College clock tower debuts with chimes and hymns



Marian Van Til, with files from DC

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa (DC) – On a crisp evening earlier this fall, following Dordt College’s Fall Music Festival, students, alumni and friends gathered round the base of the college’s new 54-foot clock tower. The tower stands just outside the Campus Center building.

Those gathered were not just waiting to hear it strike the hour for the first time – this clock is no one-trick pony. They *did* hear the clock chime the hour. But they also listened to six hymns played by the tower carillon. And they participated in the tower’s dedication ceremony.

The clock tower is capable of playing “hundreds of songs, including many familiar hymns and liturgical songs,” said a college press report.

“It’s so exciting to see this piece of Dordt’s long-term campus master plan finally come to fruition,” said John Baas, vice president for college advancement. “I think the clock tower and the regular chiming of the carillon will quickly become a very special part of the fabric of the Dordt College experience.”

Following the dedication, the clock tower began its regular chiming schedule. The clock sounds every quarter hour from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week. It chimes every hour throughout the night at a low volume. In

addition, music plays for 10 minutes at noon each day and prior to the 11:00 Wednesday morning chapel services. Music appropriate to Christian holidays is also part of its repertoire.

The tower has been part of Dordt’s master plan for several years and is one of a series of capital improvements made possible through the college’s ongoing Vision 2020 capital campaign. The clock tower was funded entirely by the donations of friends of Dordt College. Henry and Helen Van Klaveren of Modesto, California were among the major contributors to this project. Henry Van Klaveren is the founder of Hollandia Nursery and co-chair of the Vision 2020 campaign.

“Henry and Helen are truly remarkable friends, a couple who never attended college and yet have invested so much over the years into this college that we all love. Today you can see the impact of their generosity across the campus landscape; this clock tower is truly a crowning achievement. Perhaps even more importantly, there are dozens of students here today, along with an even larger throng of graduates, who were able to attend Dordt, at least in part, thanks to the Van Klaverens’ gifts to our scholarship program,” said Baas.

Egypt: Christian student murdered for refusing to remove cross

MALLAWI, Egypt (AINA) – Ayman Nabil Labib, a 17-year-old Coptic Christian student, was murdered by Muslim classmates last month after refusing to remove a crucifix he was wearing. The murder, which took place in the central Egyptian town of Mallawi, occurred after a teacher asked Labib to cover up a tattooed cross on his wrist. Labib refused, instead uncovering a cross necklace.

“The teacher nearly choked my son, and some Muslim students joined in the beating,” said Labib’s father. “They beat my son so much in the classroom that he fled to the lavatory on the ground floor, but they followed him and continued their assault,” the victim’s mother added. “When one of the supervisors took him to his room, Ayman was still breathing. The ambulance transported him from there dead, one hour later.”

The Egyptian media portrayed the incident as non-sectarian. However, Copts Without Borders, a Coptic news website, refuted this version and was first to report that the Christian student was murdered because he was wearing a cross. Eyewitnesses told Ayman’s father that his son was not beaten up in the school yard as per the official story, but in the classroom.

“We wanted to believe the official version,” said activist Mark Ebeid, “because the Coptic version was a catastrophe, as it would take persecution of Christians also to schools.” He blamed the church in Mallawi for keeping quiet about the incident.

Prosecutors arrested and detained two Muslim students, Mostapha Essam and Walid

Mostafa Sayed, pending investigations in the murder case.

Silenced by fear

The father said that everyone in Mallawi knew how the event took place, but not one of the students’ parents was prepared to let their children come forward and give a statement to the police. “They are afraid of the school administration, which has lots of ways to harass the students, as well as being afraid of the families of the two Muslim killers.”

“I insist that the Arabic teacher, the headmaster, and the supervisors should be charged as well as the two students who committed the crime,” said the boy’s father. “The Arabic language teacher incited the students to attack my son, the headmaster who would not go to the classroom to see what is going on there when alerted to the beatings, but rather said to be left alone and continued sipping his tea, and the supervisors who failed in their supervising duties.”

Prosecution has three witnesses, two men working at school who named the assailants and one student who wanted to retract his statement, but was refused.

“The evidence is under lock and key. Everyone is hiding the evidence. We will know the truth after forensic medicine has finished the report next week,” said Labib’s father, adding that the head of detectives on the case tried to influence the witnesses, claiming that the murder took place as a result of friction between students.”

The governor of Minya, El-Rouby, visited the Coptic Bishop Dimitrios of Mallawi to extend his condolences, accompanied by representatives of Minya military authorities. He also suspended the school’s headmaster and the two supervisors, as well as two social workers who were on duty when Ayman died, and referred them to an investigation committee. But all of them have disappeared since then.

After the funeral service for Ayman, over 5000 Christians marched along the streets of Mallawi, denouncing the killing of a student whom they described as a “martyr of the cross.”

Prominent columnist Farida El-Shobashy wrote in the independent newspaper *Masry Youm*, “I was shaken to the bones when I read the news that a teacher forced a student to take off the cross he wore, and when the Christian student stood firm for his rights, the teacher quarreled with him, joined by some of the students; he was beastly assaulted until his last breath left him.” She wondered if the situation were reversed and a Muslim was killed for not removing the Koran he wore, what would have been the reaction.

Farida pointed out that the gravity of the incident is heightened because of it taking place in a school and being incited by a teacher. She went on to blast the Ministry of Education for neglecting the education syllabus which calls for preventing discrimination, but instead “left it to teachers to spread the fanatic Wahabi ideology.”

Columns

Patchwork Words

Melissa Kuipers



The year after graduating high school I attended a "Vision Retreat," a time to get away from the distractions of relationships, work, entertainment and life in general to focus on discovering one's personal calling. I remember a portion of the retreat when all of us attendees sat around in a large, mood-lit auditorium with pens and pads of paper in our laps and were told, "Now dream big. What did you want to do as a kid? As a teenager? What activities or ideas made you feel alive? What do you sense, at the core of your being, you are meant to accomplish?" We hurriedly wrote down all our deep ambitions and then waited for the next set of instructions. "Now take that dream, and DREAM BIGGER! God can do infinitely more through you than you could even imagine, so start by imagining BIG!"

And so we left at the end of the weekend, full of amazing intentions and aspirations to single-handedly change the world.

Years later I started a career and watched my dream-driven friends start theirs. I can't say we've all been disappointed with where life has led us. But it's been different. For some of us, our dreams have changed drastically. For others, our five and 10 year plans haven't yielded the results we expected. Some did exactly what they set out to do, only to find it wasn't quite as life-altering and constantly mind-blowing as they thought. "Do what you would do if nobody paid you to do it," I was

Calling and community

told again and again growing up. But what happens when you dream of touching children's lives through teaching but end up spending years on the supply list because there aren't enough full-time jobs? What happens when you start a family young and can't invest the time towards getting the PhD that you had hoped to pursue? What happens when you long to be an artist but can't even afford groceries?

Community focus

The sense of spiritual calling put forward by the vision retreat may have given us great ambition, but it can also lead to a sense of disappointment with the wonderful accomplishments we have made: forging committed friendships, learning how to understand people who are different from us, raising children, volunteering, developing a new skill or hobby, etc. I find that I'm increasingly inspired not by my friends' educational or occupational successes, but by the ways in which they form relationships or consider others: by a friend's efforts to make an extra meal at supper so that she can bring food to a neighbour who just got out of surgery; by people who form close relationships with nieces and nephews or take time to sing in the church choir.

Maybe growing up is about realizing that God's calling for our vocations isn't nearly as important as the day-to-day forms of experiencing his presence through someone's company,

through the beauty of a creative action or piece of art, through vulnerability in conversation.

The emphasis we place on finding one's primary passion in life, the one thing you were always meant to do, puts a lot of pressure on people as they seek to serve God with their lives and can have devastating results if things don't work out the way we hoped. Furthermore, it limits God. To believe he can only work through me in one way doesn't leave a lot of room for humility or searching in the ways in which we follow him.

Not only that, when we focus on calling as an independent process or experience we lose sight of the Biblical story of God's guiding a community to reach the world with his love. As Henri Nouwen explains in *Clowning in Rome*, "We should never forget that God calls us as a people, and that our individual vocations should always be seen as a part of the larger vocation of the family or the community. We cannot use the group solely as a means to develop or give shape to our individual aspirations. As long as we see the community as a support system to help us realize our individual ideals, we are more children of our time than children of God. Our own individual calling can only be seen as a particular manifestation of the calling of the community to which we belong."

Melissa Kuipers (mckuip@gmail.com) is completing her Masters in Creative Writing at the University of Toronto.

Flowers and Thistles

Curt Gesch



for Allan Smit

Quick, now, can you identify the following quotation?

He [God] unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth.

How about this one? *He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' And to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.'* Or this? *Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash?*

If you answered, "The book of Job," you win a prize. If you thought to yourself, "That's the part at the end where God asks Job questions and Job repents in dust and ashes," well . . . no prize.

The quotations come from Elihu, not one of the three notorious comforters but someone else who was "very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God."

Elihu sounds like one of the three, but also sounds a lot like God speaking out of the whirlwind:

Have you entered the storehouses of the snow? . . . What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed?

Job doesn't muzzle himself at Elihu's words, nor does he repent after hearing Elihu's peroration. The layout of the book of Job suggests that Elihu – while perhaps not quite so bad as the three – is still anything but a true comfort.

We are left wondering what exactly is the difference between parts of Elihu's unsatisfactory speech and God's questions?

I tried to study this and got more and more confused, but a couple things stood out. One was this: Elihu seems to know the answers to what creation is saying, the causes of Job's suffering and to the mysteries of life. Strangely enough, Job never says he knows these answers and God doesn't provide them. Elihu reminds me of people who are convinced that now that we "know" things like the map of the human genome or how brain chemicals affect human behaviour we have reduced

Elihu knows (he thinks)

the number and nature of life's mysteries.

Deism?

A second thing that stood out to me was Elihu's emphasis on God's control of the creation. Control, omniscience, omnipotence: these may be attributes of God, but they are adjectives. I am quite sure that Job's final response to God was not to an attribute but to an awesome Person.

One time long ago I was talking to Dr. Al Greene who had finished presenting a workshop to Christian school teachers about a Christian view of the creation. After hearing a discussion in which various participants mentioned things like "When you look at the mountains, you just have to see God's power," and "God is so huge," I muttered to Al, "It sounds like a bunch of Deists in this room." To which Al replied, "Yes, of course, Curt, we haven't got too far."

Elihu's exhortations about creational processes remind me of Deism: he seems to proclaim a God who is great, and mighty, but Elihu never seems to see the heavens declaring the tender love of a Father or the nurturing presence of God's Spirit.

A former student of mine, Michael B., asked this question in his graduation speech: "When you look at Hudson Bay Mountain [it towers over Smithers, B.C.] do you see only God's power, or also God's love and care for his world?"

I'm not sure I have much of a certain answer to the question of what *exactly* the creation is revealing. I'm sure that our Saviour is there somewhere, and the Father and the Holy Spirit. But what *exactly* does a person with mental illness reveal to me about God, about life? What do endophytic fungi in fescue grass tell me? Do genetically modified soybeans and canola plants participate in the sound of creation groaning? Should we break into a doxology about our Blackberry-culture or lament it? What is stewardship and what is human hubris?

What language does the wind speak? And what is the



William Blake's *The Wrath of Elihu* depicts Elihu giving his speech to Job.

thunder saying?

I'm quite sure that Elihu's answer – the way I read it – is not the one that brought Job to his knees. I don't think it was an *answer* that finally made holy Job clap his hand over his mouth. I think it was a matter of Job embracing the mystery, acting in faith without having knowledge or answers.

The wind is saying this: Bite your tongue and trust in God.

Gerard Manley Hopkins encountered a harvest field and sang:

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,

Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour. And seeing that the beauty, the revelation and the Saviour were there *but the beholder/Wanting* Hopkins comments that when the Revelator and the Beholder meet,

The heart rears wings bold and bolder

And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.

Repentance and flight may not be so far removed as we suppose. I glean as I may, and hope for a hurling.

Curt Gesch (curtgesch@hotmail.com) used to know a lot about a lot and knew that he knew. He lives in Quick, B.C., not too far from Uz.

Reviews

Holiday reading ideas for children

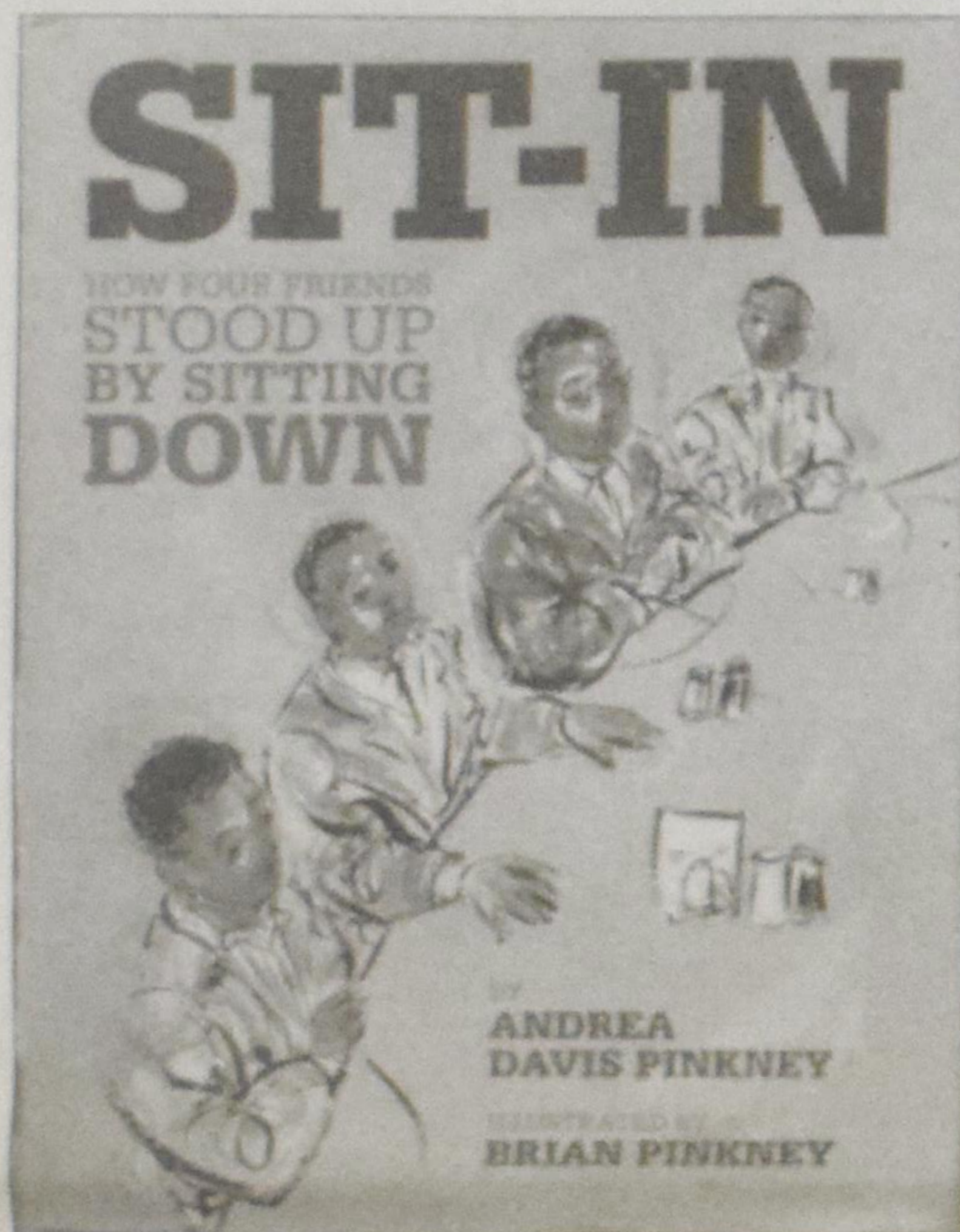
By Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On February 1, 1960, four African American friends went to a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and asked to be served. They were refused because of the store's "Whites Only" policy.

With Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words ringing in their ears – "We must . . . meet hate with love" – the next day, the four, along with others, continued the sit-in. News of their courageous act spread. Soon lunch counter protests were held in other American cities. White students joined their black friends to protest segregation in other places, too, such as libraries, pools, buses and parks.

Soon after, Ella Baker organized protesting students into the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). When President John F. Kennedy heard about the SNCC's goal of integration, he addressed the nation on television to urge Americans to seek fairness and equality for all people. He also told Congress to take steps to eliminate segregation. As a result, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was composed. On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson made the act into a law.

In her thought-provoking, singsong narrative, Andrea Davis Pinkney uses a recipe metaphor to explain a disturbing period in American history in a way that young readers will understand and appreciate. Brian Pinkney's bright, vivacious illustrations capture the energy and volatility of these historical events.



Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up By Sitting Down
by Andrea Davis Pinkney
Illustrated by Brian Pinkney
(Little, Brown and Company, 2010)

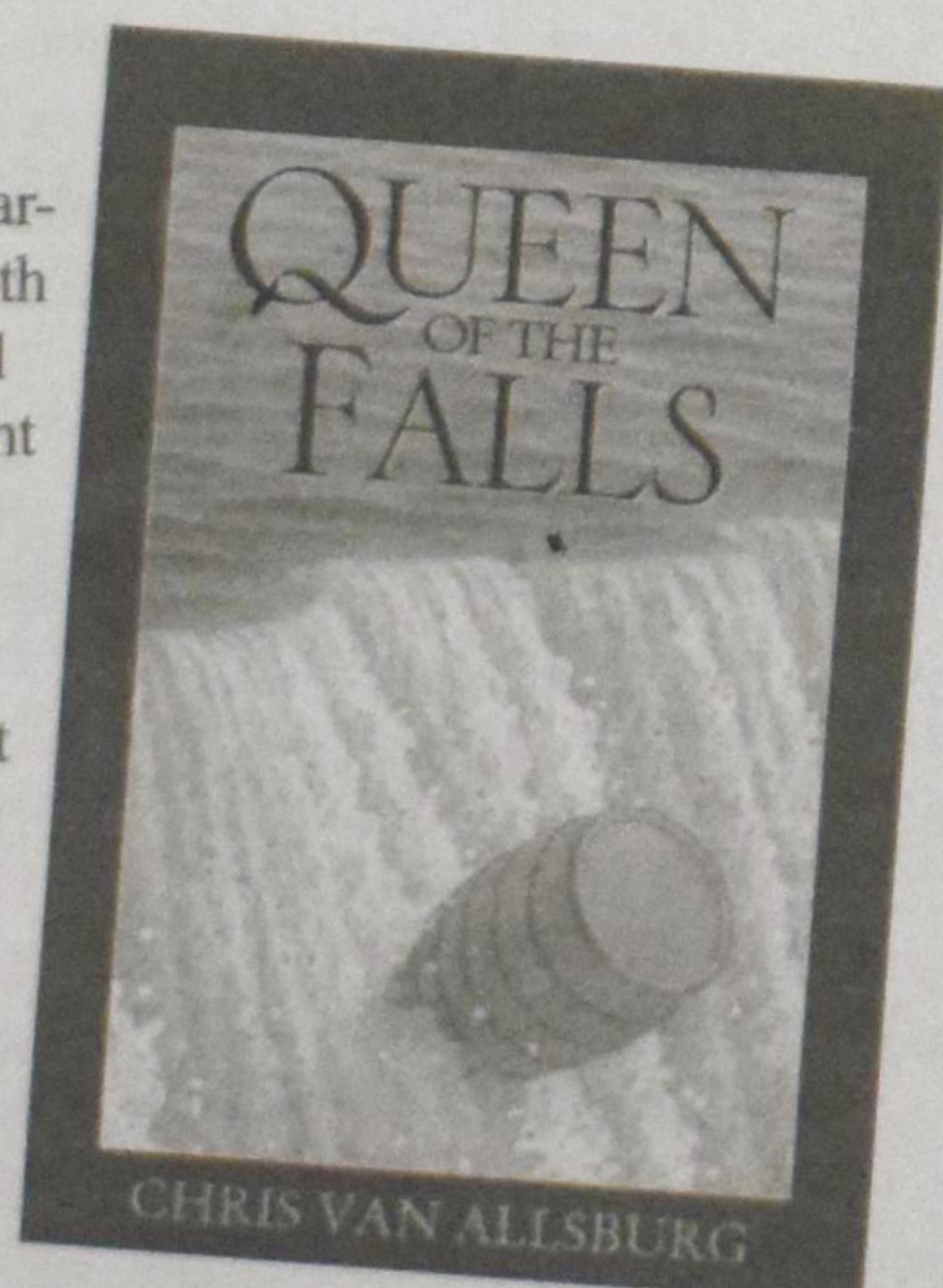
Annie Edson Taylor, a 62-year-old widow, was disillusioned with life. As owner of a charm school in Bay City, Michigan, she taught children etiquette and other social niceties. Forced to close her school because of declining enrollment, Annie worried about her future. *What I need is a plan to get rich quickly*, she thought.

Suddenly, she knew how to find fame and fortune. She would go over Niagara Falls in a barrel!

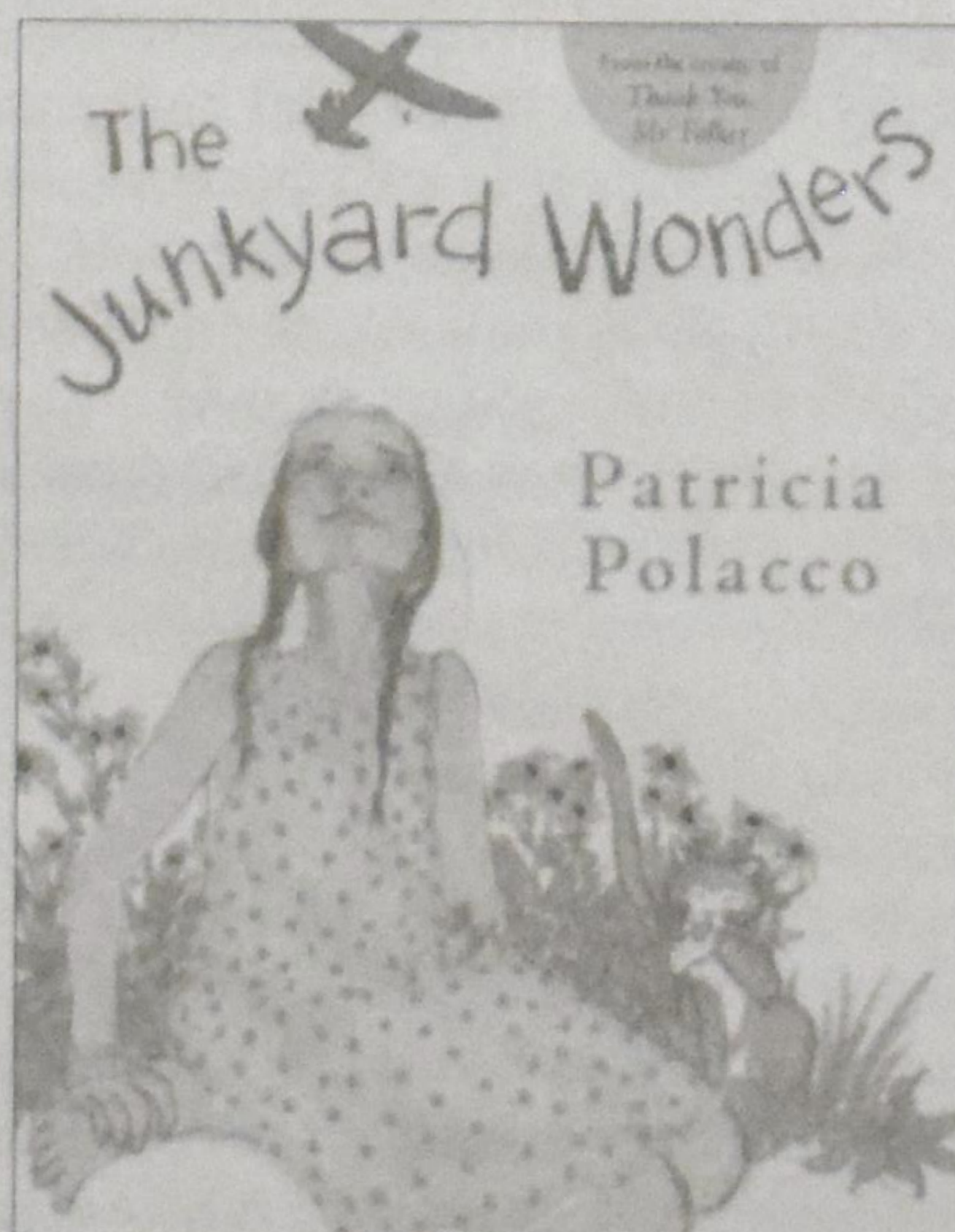
Though, initially, no one wanted to construct a barrel for her foolhardy escapade, Annie finally convinced someone to help her. In order to promote her plan, she hired Frank Russell, who had his own dreams of getting rich from Annie's possible future fame. As a result of Frank's advertising, reporters and crowds of people gathered to watch Annie's death-defying deed.

How Annie survives her barrel ride over the falls and her subsequent years of disillusionment are the topics of this rivetting tale based on the true story of Annie Edson Taylor, the only woman who ever took a solitary ride over the falls.

Van Allsburg's informative text and muted, detailed illustrations capture the range of human emotions – fear, wonder, disappointment, courage and determination – which Annie's daring feat evoked.



Queen of the Falls
written and illustrated
by Chris Van Allsburg
(Houghton Mifflin Books
for Children, 2010)



The Junkyard Wonders
written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco
(Philomel Books, 2010)

Peterson reminds them that "Some people look at things the way they are and cry, 'Why!' But I want you to look at things and see what they could be and ask, 'Why not?'"

Polacco's vivid, warm illustrations bring to life this moving story, based on her childhood experience of dyslexia and the help she received from the real Mrs. Peterson.



Migrant
by Maxine Trottier
Illustrated by
Isabelle Arsenault
(Groundwood Books, 2011)

Migrant is fiction based on the experiences of Low German-speaking Mennonites, who kept their Canadian citizenship when they moved from Canada to Mexico in 1920 and established themselves as farmers there. However, because they couldn't entirely support themselves on their farms, they returned to Canada each year as migrant workers.

Isabelle Arsenault's vivid illustrations complement this poignant story of a child who is trying to make sense of her transient world.

After playing in the snow, a young boy's joy vanishes when he realizes that one of the mittens his grandmother knit for him is lost. Grandmother comforts him with a mug of steaming hot chocolate and the promise that they will search for it the next day.

Meanwhile, a squirrel takes refuge in the cozy mitten. Soon, a rabbit, a fox, a bear, and a mouse follow suit, till the ever expanding mitten bursts. The next day, Grandmother and the boy discover pieces of yarn scattered in the snow. Perplexed, the boy wonders what happened to his mitten. Because she loves him, Grandmother promises to knit him another one.

In a rhythmic and repetitive style which young children love, Jim Aylesworth retells this favorite old folk tale believed to have originated in the Ukraine. Barbara McClintock's charming, humorous illustrations make this winsome book a visual delight.



The Mitten
retold by Jim Aylesworth
Illustrated by Barbara McClintock
(Scholastic Press, 2009)

Young Trisha is happy to leave behind her old school and the special class in which she had been enrolled because of reading difficulties. But in her new school, her joy turns to dismay when she discovers that her class is called "the junkyard" because each student is odd or different in some way.

However, Trisha's consternation soon turns to enthusiasm and joy as her teacher, Mrs. Peterson, loves and encourages each student to develop to his or her full potential. In order to help them take pride in their own gifts, she assists them in making badges for themselves, which state: "The Junkyard Wonders."

Still, the Junkyard Wonders are bullied on the playground and they become discouraged. One of them tells Mrs. Peterson, "We're all junkyard kids, even though you try to make us feel better about it. We're throwaways, junk, and everyone knows it."

Mrs. Peterson will not be thwarted. She takes her class to a junkyard and teaches them that the things some people consider junk "are actually amazing things waiting to be made into something new. Something unexpected. Something surprising." She challenges the students to collect things that they can make into something new. Back in class, that's what they do while Mrs.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema
(sonyavf55@hotmail.com)
lives in St. Catharines, Ont.
and is a freelance writer.



Features

Gathered in his arms

Jennifer Antonides

For almost as long as we've been married, Brad and I have talked about adopting a child. But we never made any concrete plans. Four children later, we began to think that our family was full. About once a year we would discuss adoption and shelve it again. Theoretically, it still seemed like something we wanted to do, and, as Christians, even felt called to do. But we had no clear vision of how to turn that vague dream into a reality.

Finally, in the spring of 2007, we decided to give adoption a serious look. We began the home study process and researched domestic and international adoptions. We agreed to weigh our options prayerfully, and allow God to make his will for us clear. We talked it over with our children, our extended family and close friends.

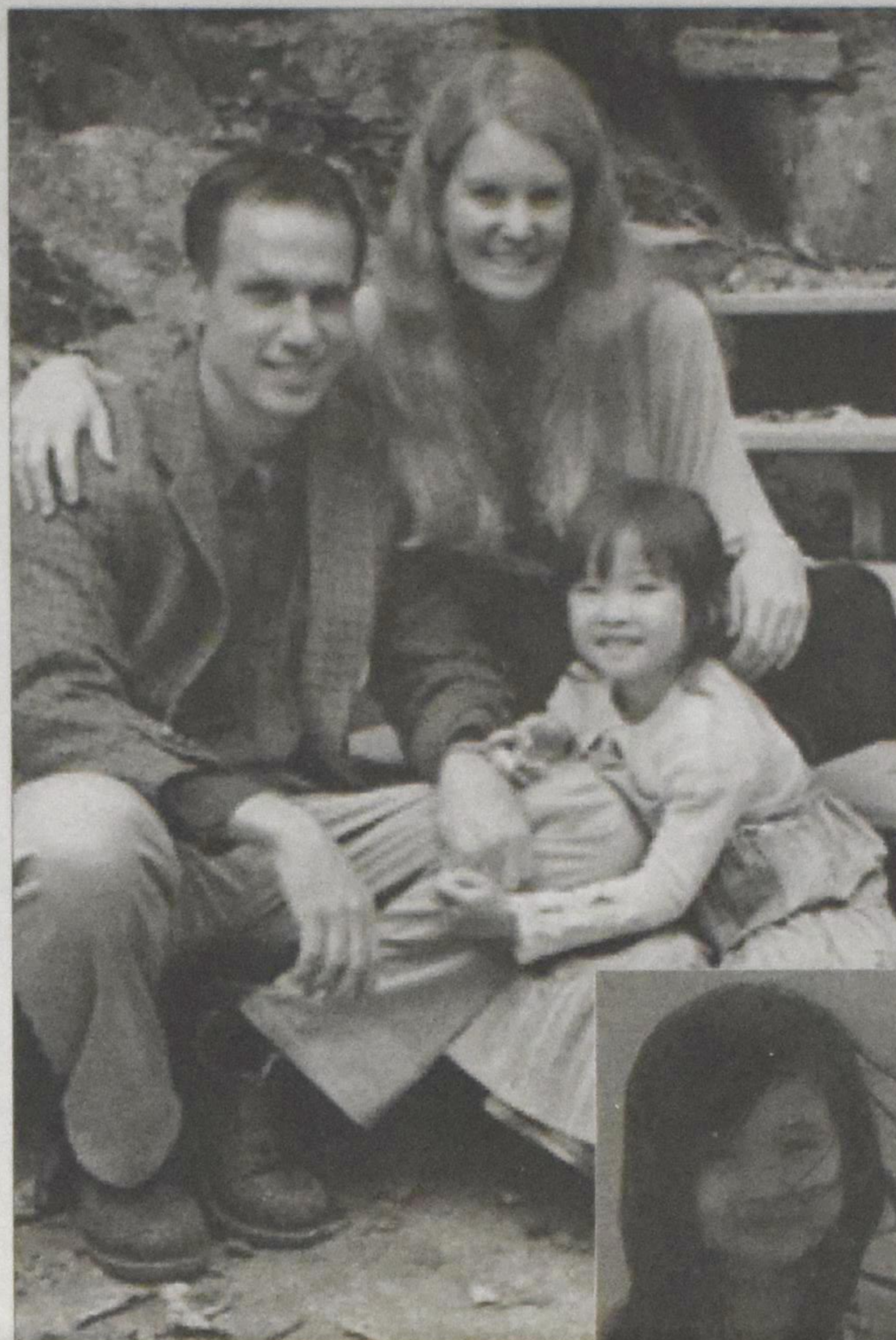
For the next two years, we travelled the path that so many other couples have travelled. Questions, doubts and fears were there alongside growing belief and hope. We were accepted by Terre Des Hommes, an agency which works in Vietnam, and were placed on their "older child/special needs" and their "baby girl" lists. After a year of praying, we received our referral for our daughter. Her name was Quynh Anh Thu. She was a perfectly healthy three year old girl. The dream was coming true. There was finally a face to look at, a person for whom to pray and plan. We sent her a parcel, containing pictures of our family and a few small gifts. We were thrilled. We were scared. We could hardly wait to go to Vietnam to meet her.

A little girl in a pink dress and orange sandals

In June 2009, Brad and I, with our youngest two children, Joel and Eve, flew to Vietnam to bring Quinn home. I will never forget the first time we saw her. We were in the office at the orphanage, waiting. We turned around and there she was! It seemed surreal. One moment, all we had was a photo, and the next moment there was a little girl wearing a pink dress and orange sandals. Her expression was blank. There were no adults escorting her – just a brave, scared little girl obediently walking in, all on her own, to meet a "new mommy and daddy." I knelt, took her hand and pulled her towards me. Her hand clutched mine in quiet desperation. We found out later that she had never received the parcel we had sent. She had absolutely no idea who she was going to meet. The courage she displayed in that moment, literally leaving all that was familiar and safe to her and walking into the unknown, humbled us and touched our hearts.

Quinn stayed with us at the hotel while we waited on the Vietnamese government to process her paperwork. Those were wild days! She had fun with Joel and Eve. Her laughter was loud and infectious. For the most part, her attitude towards new experiences was simple: "If it looked like fun, it WAS fun!" It was immediately evident that Quinn was a bright little girl; she learned her first English word "more" after hearing it only three times! We had a two-day "honeymoon" before the temper tantrums and tears began. We had known these would come and thought we were prepared. Often when she cried, I cried. At bedtime, we were all exhausted; when she went to bed, I went to bed. At first, she wanted nothing to do with Brad and refused to go to him. He was a rock in those early days, reassuring me that everything was going to work out. I'll admit that I had my doubts! It was a time of intense upheaval and emotion.

By July, we were home. The next stage of adjustment began. Quinn's anger slowly gave way to grief – grief for all the people and things she had lost. As her language skills grew, we began to hear bits and pieces about her



Jennifer, Brad and Quinn Antonides and Quinn today.

life in Vietnam. Love and trust grew as we lived life together. One by one, we experienced our "firsts" as a family – first winter, first Christmas, first birthday.

Two and a half years have passed. Quinn is now a vibrant six year old. She is learning to read. She loves to dress up and to be with people. She has a sensitive and caring heart, especially when she sees people who are suffering.

Learning about adoption

Brad and I have learned much since Quinn's arrival. We've learned that adoption is not easy – not for Quinn, not for us, not for our biological children. Every adoption involves loss – either loss of a birth parent, loss of family and for some, the loss of hope of giving birth to a biological child – and that loss must be addressed. The fact that Quinn was no longer an infant made the adjustment stage more intense. We had to face the issues – attachment, grief, loss, identity – immediately. We may have to deal with them again when Quinn becomes a teenager. I found myself mourning the loss of her infancy, of never being able to cradle Quinn as a baby.

The process leading up to Quinn's actual legal adoption was difficult as well. I call it the "longest pregnancy ever." So many times we questioned what we were doing, why we were doing it and whether it was the right thing to do. We would ask each other, "Is this the easy thing to do? Is it the smart thing to do? Is it the financially-wise thing to do?" The answer was "No!" But the answer was a resounding "Yes!" to this question: "Is this the right thing for us to do?" We believed in our hearts that adoption was right for our family. Throughout the entire period of waiting and adjustment, God gave us many sources of encouragement.

We learned that we needed Quinn as much as she needed us. On the surface, this may not make sense. After all, she was the abandoned child; we were a fam-

ily with four children. When Quinn first arrived home, many people in our community were excited to welcome her. There were questions about how the trip had gone and how things were going now. Often the conversation ended with the well-meant comment: "You are so good to have adopted her. She's such a lucky girl to have you as parents." That bothered me. I knew my own shortcomings as a mother. There were many times when I was anything but a "good mother." About four months after Quinn's arrival, we'd had a particularly rough spell. Nothing seemed to be going well. Quinn and I were clashing, and no matter how hard I tried, things weren't getting better. The parenting skills that had worked with the older four children just didn't work with Quinn, and I didn't know what to do. Finally I understood. I couldn't do it; we couldn't do it. We didn't really know what we were doing, or how to connect with Quinn's hurting heart. Only God did. With that humbling revelation, I began to understand the gift that God had truly given us when he entrusted us with Quinn. Quite simply, parenting Quinn forced me to give up my belief that "I can do it." Only God can.

Learning to love

We learned that love does not come automatically. It takes time – lots of time. The rush of emotion that came upon first holding Quinn was challenged by the day-to-day grind of learning how to be family. I felt guilty many times when my feelings for her weren't what I thought they should be. Those were the days I had to make the choice to love and to stand by our commitment to be her parents. We were blessed with an attachment therapist who helped us to love and trust each other. We cherish, as some of our fondest memories with Quinn to date, special moments of grieving, healing and loving that occurred in those sessions. Quinn's love for us was more immediate because it arose out of a deep necessity; it was a clingy, grasping love. She needed to "love" us because she needed the security that love could offer her. That has changed. She is far more confident of her hold on our hearts. Even more, she knows that God loves her and that his hold on her heart and her life is a forever love – and she loves him right back!

We learned that Quinn is our "own." So many people, including me, use this term unthinkingly to distinguish between biological and adopted children within a family. When God placed Quinn in our family, she became one of our "own" children. Her claim on us as her parents is as strong a claim as that of her siblings. Her story is different. She knows she has another mother and that I didn't give birth to her. We say that her brothers and sisters came from my tummy and that she is the child of our hearts.

Finally, we learned to be more grateful for the adoption we experience as children of God. We love to tell Quinn that we are all adopted! Before adopting Quinn, I had never taken too deeply to heart the thought of my adoption by God through Christ Jesus. That has changed. I see it now as a marvellous gift. Isaiah 40:11 says: "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom...."

This Shepherd is my Father. He is Quinn's Father. He is our Father. And that is enough. ✨

Jennifer Antonides lives in Port Carling, Ontario with her husband, Brad, and their five children. They attend Harvest Muskoka Bible Chapel.



Features

Adoption: 'An outward symbol of our call to care'

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In 2007, Rena and Tim Dam adopted Makeda. *Christian Courier* interviewed them to learn about their adoption journey, both before they met Makeda and after they welcomed her into their hearts and lives.

Why did you decide to adopt a baby?

Rena grew up with adopted siblings. This was always a part of how we envisioned our family. We feel that adoption is an outward symbol of our call to care for each other. There are so many children in the world who need a home. And we wanted a child. So adoption made sense.

Why did you choose an international adoption?

We were living in Uganda, East Africa when we decided to adopt from Ethiopia. We chose to adopt internationally mainly because we lived internationally. We chose Ethiopia because, unlike some countries in the world, the families of Ethiopia cannot care for all the children there. There are too many orphaned children in Ethiopia to be absorbed into local families, the traditional way of dealing with orphans. But HIV/AIDS led to a new situation and, therefore, new solutions are needed. I don't think that adoption into Western families is the answer to all of Ethiopia's orphan problems, but it's a small way to make a difference in the life of one child. And that is actually a very big difference, indeed.

We heard about an organization in Michigan (Adoption Associates, Inc.) that had just started Ethiopian adoptions, and felt the urge to pursue it. It's difficult to describe the feeling, but it was visceral, almost like a biological baby kicking in the womb. I guess it was God kicking us (gently!) in the direction of our daughter.

We took the responsibility of adopting transracially very seriously. From the beginning of our adoption process, we read widely and talked to many people. We still do. We also have a number of good books that we read with our kids that address many different facets of adoption and diversity.

It's very humbling to know and practise the fact that we can't teach our daughter everything she needs to know. This is especially true as white parents of a child of colour. It truly takes a village of people of all kinds to raise a child.

What process did you go through to adopt Makeda? What challenges did you face?

We went through a "regular" adoption process including applications, a home study, etc. But we had numerous extra hurdles because we lived in Uganda, were American and Canadian citizens, and were adopting from Ethiopia. We spent a lot of time sending things around the world by mail and tracking down documents. We received a lot of help from our parents! Things in Uganda are often slower anyway, so we did a lot of "footwork." One day we drove back and forth on bumpy dirt roads twice between the same two rural towns trying to track down the mail bus that was carrying a document we needed for our adoption paperwork.

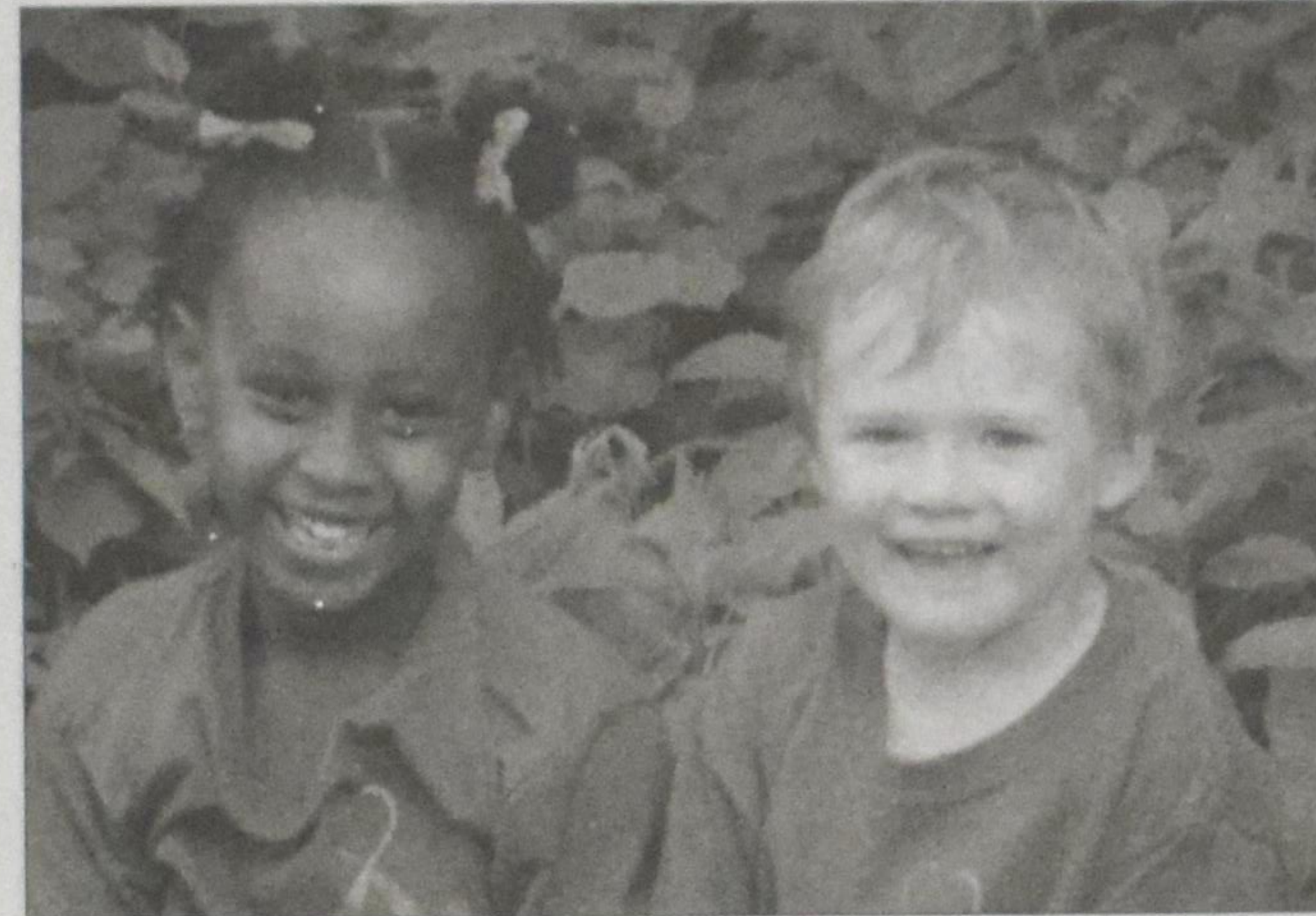
After we sent our dossier to Ethiopia, there wasn't much to do but wait. This was probably the hardest part because

it was out of our control. But learning to give up some control is a good thing for new parents to learn—perhaps the wait was not so terrible after all!

We can't describe the joy

bubbling in us when we received the first pictures of Makeda in her bed at the orphanage. We printed them off and carried them around with us—a physical symbol of God's promise.

We had some challenges even after we arrived in Ethiopia. We weren't allowed to take Makeda to stay in the house where we were guests. It was very difficult to be so close to her and not be able to have her with us.



Makeda and her brother today.

Have you told Makeda that she is adopted? How did you explain what adoption means? What questions has she asked about her adoption?

Makeda knows that she is adopted and what that means. We tell her that her birth family in Ethiopia loved her very much, but couldn't take care of her. She needed a family and we needed a baby, so God brought us together. At five years old, she hasn't asked many other questions. Many of her questions are more about skin colour than her adoption. She notices when she is the only brown person at an event. We talk candidly about her feelings about that. We also talk about the differences and similarities among the members of our family. For example, she may have different hair than her brother, but they both have dimples.

Adoption is a normal part of Makeda's life. Her uncle and aunt are adopted and so are a number of other people she knows. Makeda knows that adoption is just one of the many ways of making a family. We talk about how blessed we are to have her as a part of our family and how, really, God has adopted us all. She says that she is lucky because she has THREE mothers—Mama (Rena), her birth mother, and her godmother.

How have you experienced God's faithfulness during the adoption process and afterward?

The adoption process seemed long for us since Makeda is our first child. Like all adoptive families, we did a lot of waiting. It took about 14 months. We had to be very motivated and figure out solutions. It often looked as though we had reached an insurmountable barrier, but we always found a way to make it work out.

At the time there was no social worker or agency in Uganda to do our home studies. We patched one together with the help of a Ugandan government worker and our U.S. adoption agency. And we had a great support network. Rena's mom drove all the way to Ottawa from Michigan just to pick up some papers. We had to change our travel plans back to North America just hours before flying. Once we ended up getting fingerprinted twice in the same day! But, looking back, we can see that the timing somehow worked out.

When we first took Makeda home with us, she was ten months old and immediately claimed us as her parents. Two days later, we returned to the orphanage for a goodbye party. She clung to Rena, refusing to go to the caretakers that she had known for months. We were a family.

A few weeks after Makeda came home, we found out we were pregnant. This was a lot of baby to deal with, but the timing turned out to be a blessing. We had had the time and energy to carry out this intense adoption. And we were in North America when Makeda's brother was born, so he was able to get the medical attention that he needed.

Makeda is now a healthy, headstrong kindergartener and is great friends with her younger brother. Of course, our family isn't perfect. We have personality clashes; we all have a lot to learn yet! But we truly believe that God created Makeda to be our daughter, as we were born to parent her. We can't understand how God works these things out, but we are thankful for it every day. ➤

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema
(sonyavf55@hotmail.com) is a freelance
writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.



Why am I so fortunate?



Rebekah Batterink

Why do some parents give their children up for adoption? Perhaps they have no money, no home, or no support.

Why do other people decide to adopt and bring a child from another family into their home? My adoptive parents felt that God put a special love in their hearts for a child that needed a family. I was three days old when I was left at an orphanage, *Families for Children*, in Coimbatore, India. My Canadian parents adopted me when I was two-and-a-half years old. Sixteen years ago, my new parents, along with my foster brother, picked me up at the Toronto airport, and I have lived in Wyoming, Ontario since that day.

I have often wondered why my birth mother gave me up. What would it have been like to live in the orphanage? What would it be like to live in India with no family to support me? Why was I so fortunate to come to a loving Christian family in Canada?

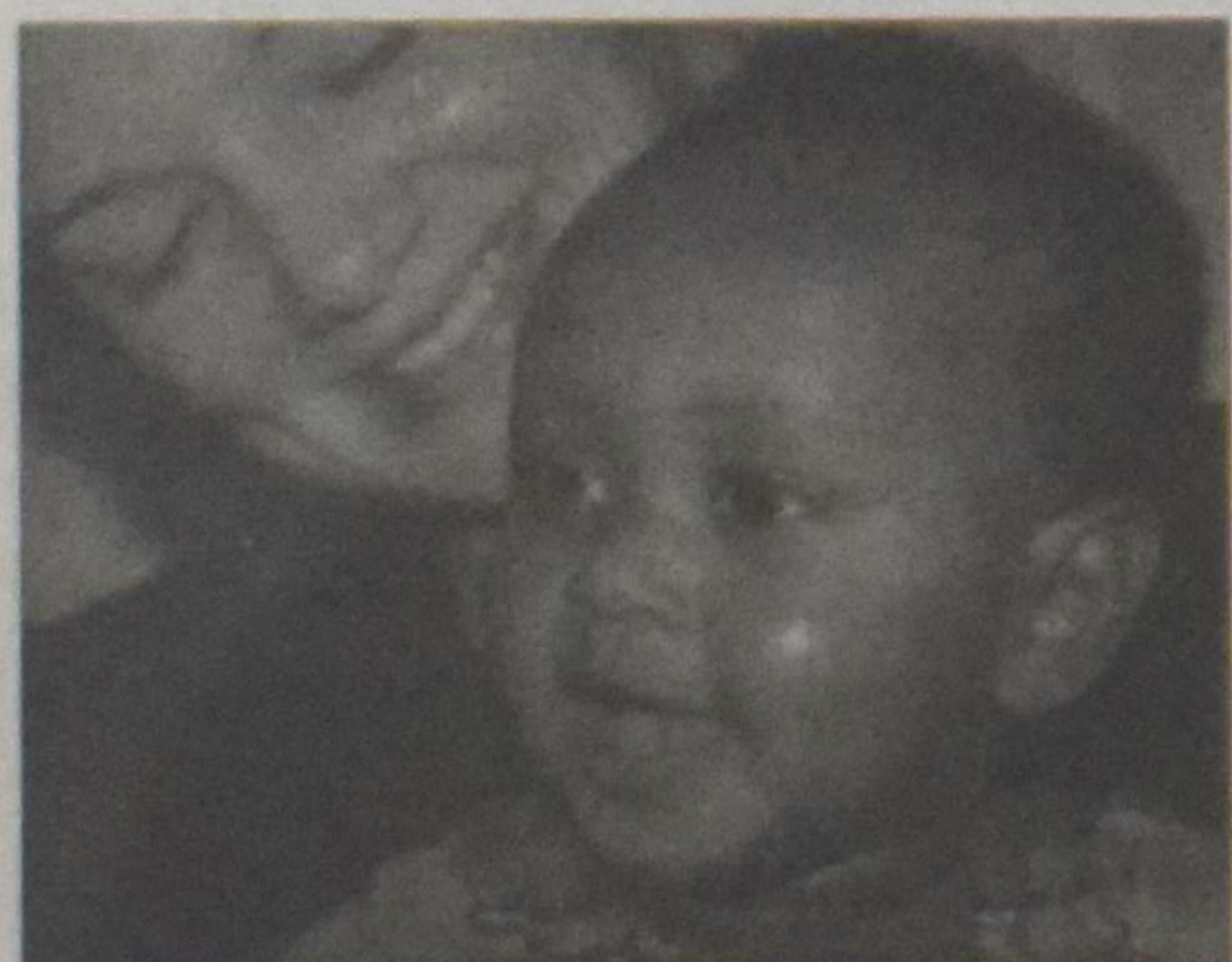
My Canadian parents taught me about a loving God, who guides and directs our lives. He is the Holder of my life and I trust that he has a special purpose for bringing me to Canada. My adoptive parents love me like one of their own three sons. I belong here. They encourage and direct me. They teach me and, when necessary, discipline me.

But I have two adoptive families. The Lord Jesus chose me and adopted me into his family, too. I am now a precious child of God. He encourages and directs me through his Word, the Bible. He also uses other Christians to guide me.

When I was adopted into my Canadian family, I was given their name—Batterink. When I was adopted into God's family, I was given his name—Christian. I try to live a life that honours both my families. It is wonderful to belong to two loving families. I am excited to see what plans God has for me now that I'm out of high school. I know I can trust him. ➤

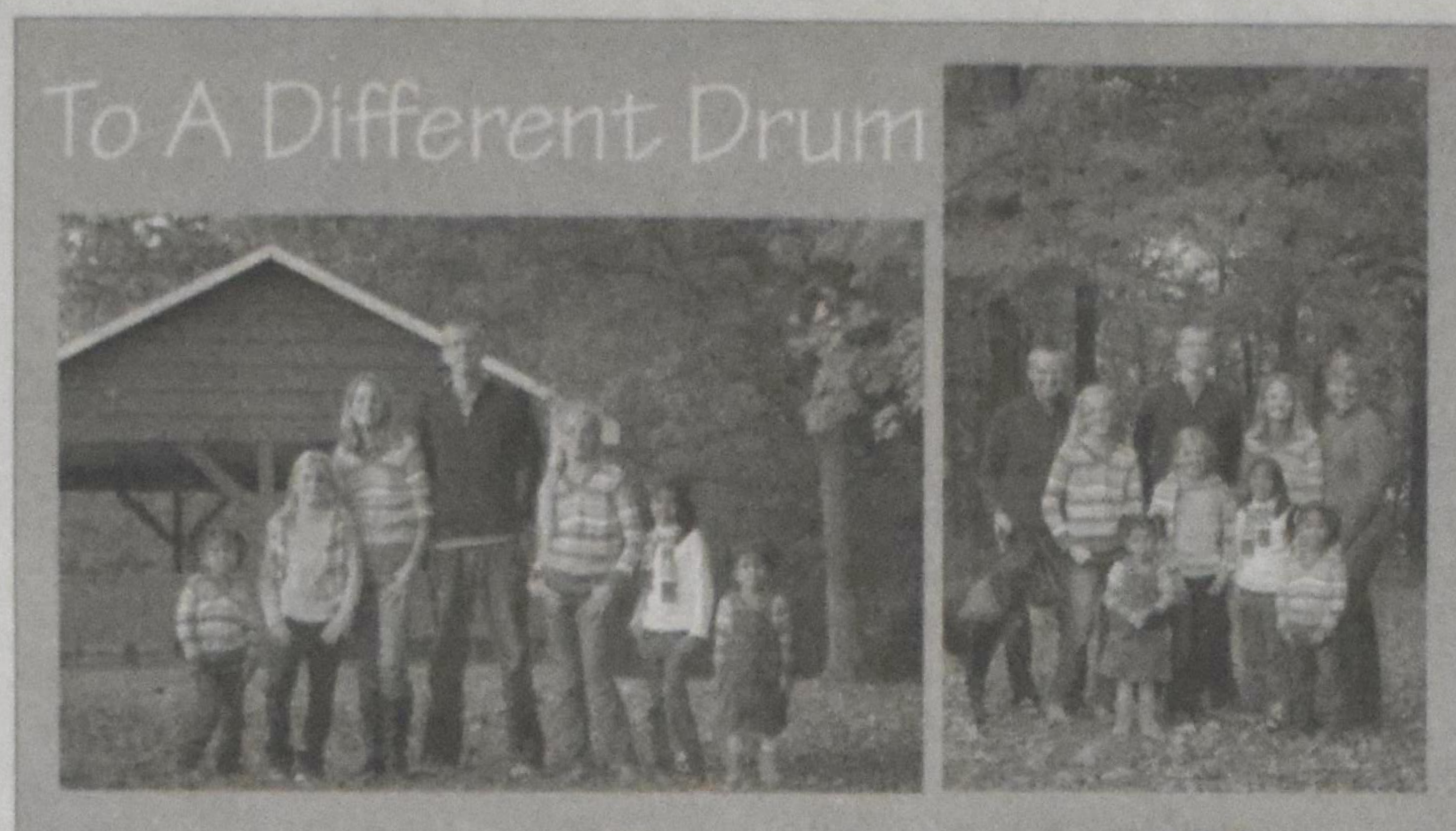
Originally published in *Desi News*, July 2011. Shared with permission.

Rebekah Batterink is a student at Lambton College studying office administration. She attends Covenant Christian Church in Wyoming, Ont.



Rena and Makeda: first day.

Features

**Deborah DeBoer's blog, To A Different Drum**

(toadifferentdrum.blogspot.com), is an insightful read. With delightful honesty, Deborah writes about her family's journey as they add three daughters from the Philippines into the mix. Deborah's photography is captivating, and she provides useful links for those who want to explore the topic of adoption further. It's heartwarming to follow this family's commitment to serve Jesus Christ through adoption.

Cathy Smith, Features Editor

Deborah introduces her family:

We are a family of nine. One boy and six girls. I am married seventeen years to my beloved Engineer. Oh, and I can't forget our mild-mannered black Lab, Maverick! Together as a family, we are continuing to discover God's plans for our lives. (Our lives are not our own, but His). We are learning and growing as He stretches us. We try to live life one day at a time, and treasure the simple gifts God has blessed us with. God is so good!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2011

Twelve Weeks

Our girls haven't been with us quite three months, but I've had some quiet moments to marvel at the changes we've already experienced. They really are amazing. Their resiliency at all the changes in their lives astounds me at times because they really are such happy little souls. Their laughter is infectious. Their desire to be like their older siblings is exhausting. It hasn't been a smooth ride – not at all, but it's been an interesting ride.

We've had some real struggles with Bella (not unexpected, but not expected this early). We've discovered though, that just having a quiet and serious talk with her works beautifully! One particular day I was at my wit's end with her behaviour. Thankfully, the Engineer was home and caught her in her most recent misbehaviour of the day. (I apologize for being a little vague, but I don't think it's fair to Bella to share the details). He was able to have a chat with her and she has literally turned over a new leaf. We've been having so much fun with her now, and, wow, can she make us laugh!

One of my favourite parts of the day with them is listening to them do their prayers before bedtime. Bella's are so well thought out, Bright Eyes's are, too, but you don't catch as many words. Peanut's are nothing short of hilarious. She has this itty-bitty voice in which you can only catch the odd word. I'm glad God understands her because we sure don't! It's a blessing to see their love for Jesus bloom and grow. We've been working on their baptism ceremony (yes, our church does infant and child baptism; please don't judge) and are excited about this special day for them. We hope and pray it will hold meaning and memories for them, too. So, although I am still feeling very exhausted (and quite spacey) most days, it is a joy to see how much our little girls are changing. We're so glad God blessed us with their little lives! Be blessed!

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2011

Truth Tuesday (AKA Home Five Months)

Can you believe it?! We've had our three girls home for five months already! As I started typing this post this morning, I was being accompanied by beautiful (well, not exactly) piano music in the background. The two youngest were tinkling away on our Clavinova. That I've learned to tune out. Other things? Hmm, not so much.

Everywhere we go, people ask us excitedly how are the girls doing!? Truthfully, I'm getting tired of the question. They've been uprooted from what was home to them more than once, to be met by these giant white people who don't speak a lick of Illongo, who proceed to drag them around a small part of their country, force them to eat food they're not sure they like, take them into this giant body of water called a pool and call it swimming, do battle with them every day because what they want and what the tall white people want are two different things, to eventually board yet another airplane and spent over 36 hours traveling, to a country where it's cold 3/4s of the year, to suddenly have to adapt to everything and everyone new.

How would you be doing?

Exactly! You'd be a basket case! Thankfully our girls are not. They are learning English quite well – provided you know they ride a bus school (school bus), and go to dress (get dressed). That they like soap (soup), and feesh (fish). They've adapted quite nicely to the cooler weather. In fact, today it's 15 degrees Celsius out and the two youngest are outside playing without their

winter coats on and having a great time.

They love school, although academically one is doing much better than the other. (I'm not going to say who, but she is getting the help she needs). One is already asking to take piano lessons like her older sisters. Basically, they jump into everything with two feet! In fact, one of them so much so that I've been seriously considering making her wear a crash helmet all day.

The question we, as the girls' parents need to hear is, "How are **you** doing?" (Happily one of the awesome children's teachers at Bible study did say to me that she sincerely hoped I was finding time to take a break once in a while. I then proceeded to laugh hysterically. Just kidding!).

All fun aside, even though the girls are adjusting well, sometimes **we** are not. The girls are **still** very loud. They are also very boisterous, whiny, and demanding. You have to realize there are **three** of them, plus four older siblings who although very well adjusted and adapting nicely to their three little sisters, need some Mom and Dad time too. What I am saying is that these three are **very high maintenance** yet. Surprisingly, I do let them out of my sight, but bells start ringing in my head the second I don't hear anything. If you give in to a previous "No" even once, they will work it to their advantage every time. In their case, they very much love that adage "rules were made to be broken."

I feel a little sad for me, when I read from my fellow Philippines adoptive families how in love they are with their new son or daughter. Many days, I'm just not feelin' it. I love them yes, because I know God planned them perfectly for our family. I just am not loving the screaming, whining, lying, disobedience, jealousy, and general cacophony of noise they create. So am I feeling attached to them? Yes, there are times that I do feel attached to them. Do I feel like we've bonded? Hmm, not as much. It's coming, but some days are seriously better than others.

At this point I find myself wishing they could communicate their needs and wants more clearly. Yes, their English continues to expand, but they still aren't able to connect what they are feeling or thinking to how to say it. That's the thing. They understand instruction (**most** of the time), but they cannot communicate when they don't, nor can they tell us what they are feeling or thinking. Sometimes it drives me mad because you can see it on their faces that they want to explain what they're feeling, but they haven't the foggiest idea how or even where to start. I firmly believe that once they can communicate their feelings that we'll overcome a huge portion of the whining, greediness, and general obnoxiously loud noise. Of course, their ability to communicate will open up all sorts of new issues, but we'll deal with those when they arrive.

I find myself in a perpetual state of exhaustion. I'm sure even in my sleep, there is a part of my brain that is attuned and ready to flinch at the sound of screeching or high decibel chatter. I'm happy they're in bed by 7:30 and that we no longer even have to sit at their door until they fall asleep, but I find myself working at breakneck speed to do all the things that I can't do during the day – only to fall into bed an hour past when I should be asleep. Only to wake up too early and start over again.

Until you have been with our daughters for a day, you will not fully comprehend what I mean when I say that they are **busy**. Only the unfortunate few experience it. ☹ On the



The three girls.



The girls being baptized.

Columns

Artful Eye



SHELLEY KORVEMAKER PHOTOGRAPHY

The Magic of a Father and a Daughter

I see the magic of a father and a daughter
As they build sandcastles on the beach.
I watch the pair as they lounge by the blue water.
Knowing fatherhood is something that you cannot teach.

As they build sandcastles on the beach,
He sculpts the sand with a big strong hand.
Knowing fatherhood is something that you cannot teach.
Next to him, she looks so little as she pours the sand.

He sculpts the sand with a big strong hand.
No words are needed as they work side by side.
Next to him, she looks so little as she pours the sand.
Father and daughter share a bond that they cannot hide.

No words are needed as they work side by side.
Clad in an orange bikini, she builds the castle tall.
Father and daughter share a bond that they cannot hide.
As the waves encroach, he builds a giant wall.

Clad in an orange bikini, she builds the castle tall.
I watch the pair as they lounge by the blue water.
As the waves encroach, he builds a giant wall.
I see the magic of a father and a daughter.

Linda Jonasson



Shelley Korvemaker is a photographer living in Wyoming, Ont. She and her family attend Wyoming CRC.



Linda Jonasson is an elementary school teacher and writer. She lives with her family in Brantford, Ontario and attends Hope CRC. Check out her blog at alinefromlinda.blogspot.com.

To a different drumcontinued from p. 12

other hand, they are so stinking cute, and ridiculously funny, sometimes that I can't begin to imagine life without them.

It's then – when you realize that you can't imagine life without them – that you know that perhaps, despite the perpetual noise and the exhaustion that the bonding is coming along quite nicely.

Adoption isn't a destination, it's a lifelong journey into love.

Adoption is a major undertaking in every way, physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally and financially. ➤

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til



'Lord, thee I Love with all my heart'



I'll always claim the Calvinist wing of the Reformation as my spiritual home, but I work as the music director in a Lutheran church. One of my perks is choosing three of the four hymns we sing each Sunday (the pastor chooses the hymn following the sermon). I also decide whether we'll chant or sing the day's Psalm. I frequently use Psalm settings from the *Psalter Hymnal*.

My choosing the hymns doesn't automatically mean that we sing my own favorites. The first criterion is that the hymn texts relate to the Scripture lessons. Nevertheless, it often happens that hymns or chorales I love are appropriate on a given Sunday.

What makes me especially love certain ones? The best are those whose peculiar, exquisite alliance of text and tune speaks profoundly to me – as biblical truth, as poetry, as music. Such artful, Spirit-filled intertwining of word and music has the power to elicit tears: of joy, gratitude, conviction of sin, sorrow, anticipation of the life to come. How a tune is set to harmony can be an additional joy. The German Lutheran chorales harmonized by J.S. Bach have no equal.

Last Sunday I led the congregation in such a chorale: "Lord, Thee I Love With All My Heart" (in German, "Herzlich Lieb Hab Ich Dich, O Herr"). The text was written in Wittenberg, 1569, by Martin Schalling. The anonymous tune grew up around Straßbourg, appearing in the *Orgeltabulatur-Buch* of 1577. Luther had died just two decades earlier. Bach (1685-1750) clearly loved this chorale and took its confession as his own. He used it in three cantatas and his *St. John Passion*, and set it more than once as an organ chorale.

"Herzlich Lieb" has become to me a kind of confessional, poetic-musical summary statement. I'd like it sung at my funeral. Alas, I won't be able to sing along (I'm sure I won't be fretting that when the time comes).

The three-stanza chorale takes up two hymnal pages. This is meaty stuff. It is both personal and communal; a confession of total commitment to and wholehearted love for God. It is a prayer for that love to remain steadfast; a plea for cheer amid sorrow; a cry that God won't forsake us. It is a song of gratitude for the Lord's rich bounty; a yearning to glorify God's name in all we do; an appeal for help in carrying our crosses to the end. It is also an entreaty for clearheadedness in seeing and shunning false doctrine and escaping Satan's wiles.

And then ... then comes the glorious third stanza, a profound confession of hope in the resurrection of the body, a reveling in the joy awaiting the sinner-saint who will rise to see Christ face to face and praise him without end.

I'm a firm believer in the continued value of tactile ink on paper. But right now I could wish that, as on a computer, you were able to click a link on your CC copy and hear what I'm hearing. Short of that, we can confess the text together – and with the church universal, including the 16th century Reformers who wrote it and the 17th - 18th century Bach who ensured its being passed down to us:

*Lord, thee I love with all my heart; I pray thee, ne'er from me depart;
with tender mercy cheer me.*

*Earth has no pleasure I would share, yea, heav'n itself were void and bare
if thou, Lord, wert not near me.*

*And should my heart for sorrow break, my trust in thee can nothing shake.
Thou art the portion I have sought; Thy precious blood my soul has bought.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord,
forsake me not, I trust thy Word.*

*Yea, Lord, 'twas thy rich bounty gave my body, soul, and all I have
in this poor life a labor.*

*Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place may glorify thy lavish grace
and serve and help my neighbour.*

Let no false doctrine me beguile, let Satan not my soul defile.

Give strength and patience unto me to bear my cross and follow thee.

*Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord,
in death thy comfort still afford.*

*Lord, let at last thine angels come, to Abr'ham's bosom bear me home,
that I may die unfearing;*

*And in its narrow chamber keep my body safe in peaceful sleep
until they reappearing.*

*And then from death awaken me, that these mine eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, they glorious face, my Savior and my fount of grace.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, my prayer attend,
and I will praise thee without end!* ➤

Marian Van Til (mvantil@roadrunner.com) is a former CC editor living in Youngstown, NY.

Columns

Everyday Christian

Cathy Smith



This is my 12th and final year of teaching catechism. I joke that I've finally learned enough church history to graduate! I always begin by telling my students that I enjoyed catechism as a teenager. They smirk. I tell them we're going to have fun. They roll their eyes. No really, I say. I perform, with serious gangsta attitude, a catechism rap I invented. They perk up.

*Wake up, kids, it's half-past eight!
Ain't nothin' really changin' but the date.
You're a real grandslammer, but you're no Babe Ruth.
You gotta learn how to relate,
Or you'll be stoppin' at the Pearly Gate!
Now Luther and Calvin's who I'm representin'
Ain't nobody better in my hood...
They say the only way's by repentin'
And not by any works that you might call good.
So, wake up, kids, listen to what I say!
This ain't no cheap rhyme display.
If you wanna get to Reformation Day...
It's Geneva and Wittenburg, all the way. Yo!*

On our first night together, I ask my students why they go to our church. Invariably, with amusement or derision, they answer, "Because my parents make me." We go on a field trip and check out all the churches in our village – Baptist, United, Presbyterian. There are seven other churches in our bite-sized community! We slide through Tim Hortons for some donuts. I leave them with this question: Why don't your parents (and you) belong to those churches? The next week we're off and running, travelling back in time to figure out how we got here – to the classic white-sided church on 4524 Confederation Line in Wyoming, Ontario.

Recently I had a chance to visit a museum in the basement of the Graafschap Christian Reformed Church, near Holland, Michigan. (Huge shout out to Bill Sytsma and friends who had the foresight and dedication to create this archival treasure). The artefacts and displays tell the story of

Back to the future

the birth of the CRCNA. Those stubborn Dutch pioneers overcame tremendous obstacles to build a church and carve a community out of the inhospitable Michigan forest. I marvel at my ecclesiastical bloodline, simultaneously herculean and petty. In 1865, a scant eight years after secession and the formation of a "denomination" of four tiny congregations, they are squabbling about fire insurance. If you buy fire insurance, you betray your lack of trust in God and tarnish the church's witness. After vehement wrangling, the issue is finally resolved ... you can participate in the Lord's Supper if you own fire insurance, but can't serve as deacon or elder. Such austere faith was put to the test in 1871 when most of Holland, Michigan was burned to the ground. Insured or not, the settlers carried on. They rebuilt their town and their lives. They kept on going to church.



Hannah Klazinga, columnist Cathy Smith's lone catechumen this year.

her faith, her choices about church membership.

I'll testify to my love for the CRC and make a pitch for it being the church she should cling to as she matures. I'll use every teacher's trick I know – a rap song, video clips, and those old tried and true mnemonic devices like GRACE



Museum display in the Graafschap Christian Reformed Church.

This year, one last time, I'll guide my lone catechumen (no one really calls them that, anymore), yes, my ONE student, down the historical path from Paul's missionary journeys to the Inquisition to Graafschap CRC to the Wyoming CRC. We'll talk about her hopes and dreams,

a Calvinist today also means that we will have to work at keeping alive the memories of older sayings and teachings in the hope that there will soon come a day when many others will want to learn such things again."

Mouw's right. Thank you, Bill Systma, curator of our heritage. Thank you, Rev. John Wierenga, my first catechism teacher. And thank you, dear Hannah Klazinga, for showing up each Tuesday night and listening. For wanting to learn. Another teenager, Graafschap settler Egbert Fredriks, wrote, "Even in the midst of this misery, prayers to God for mercy were heard and the woods rang with psalms. We remained firm in the belief that we journeyed with him. We kept believing on his promises that light would shine upon us out of the darkness and better times would come."

Seated beside Hannah, in a plain church basement room, reading from *A.D.: A Study of Church History*, I can still believe it: "The light will shine out of the darkness and better times will come." ➤

Cathy Smith (cathy@christiancourier.ca) is features editor with CC. She lives in Wyoming, Ontario.

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove



All of us feel anxious at times. We can easily worry about things that may or may not happen. Usually we are able to keep on going and meet our adult responsibilities, but sometimes anxiety can take over and control our lives.

Q. I am a 30-year-old guy living on my own. I have a great career in finance and work for a company that is very supportive. They are presently funding my graduate degree, which I am working very hard to complete.

The trouble is that I have been struggling with anxiety for over ten years now. So far I have managed to deal with it, but lately the anxious thoughts are taking over so much so that I have started missing days at work. My studies are also suffering. I am having trouble concentrating and am handing my assignments in late. I am worried I will not be able to graduate next spring as planned.

In addition, my life in the last six months has been extra stressful. My father's cancer has come back and he is working hard to fight it one more time. My mom is scared and seems to be depending on me for emotional strength – even though my two sisters still live at home. I am worried about my studies and my family and feel overwhelmed a

lot of the time.

R. I am glad you are sharing your story because it is clear that your symptoms are interfering with your life. While all of us feel anxious at times, your level of anxiety is now interfering with your responsibilities at work and at school. You also indicate you have been troubled by feelings of anxiety for the last ten years. And now, the added stress with your father's illness is making your anxiety more intense.

Generally speaking, a third of the people who experience high levels of anxiety have sensitive nervous systems influenced by their physiology. Their problems may include general nervousness, restlessness, fatigue, inability to concentrate, irritability, muscle tension, depression and insomnia. Some also report an increase in anxiety when in conflict with other people, experiencing a change in their work and when additional demands are placed on them.

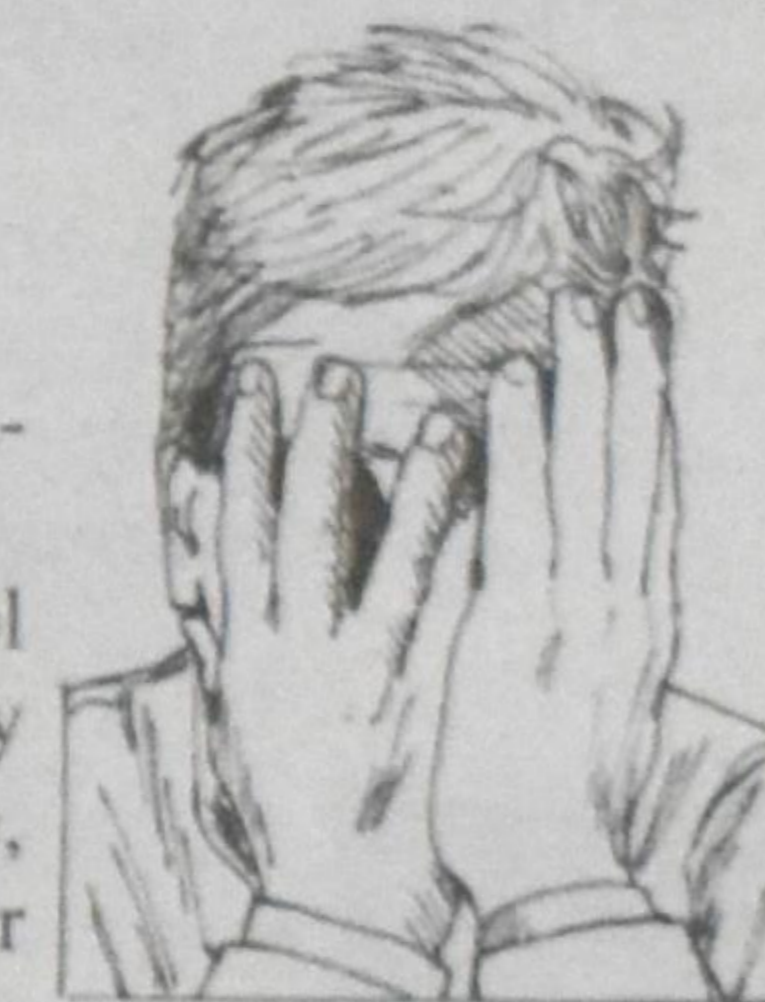
In your case, I suggest you prioritize what is most important to you. You may want to keep a log to see where your time goes during the day and evening. Then set up a reasonable study schedule and stick to it so that you can obtain your degree as planned. I also suggest you talk with your mother and the two siblings still living at home, to see if the support your mother needs is equally divided. If not, be assertive and offer a reasonable amount of assistance to

your mother but have some expectations of your siblings as well.

Once you feel a sense of control over your life some of your anxiety may disappear. At the same time, the stress and sorrow of your father struggling with cancer needs to be taken seriously and so I suggest you see your physician in case medication might be helpful in getting you through this challenge. Also, because you have a history of anxiety, do not hesitate to find a good therapist to help you walk through this important time in your life.

The positive side of suffering from anxiety is that you get to know yourself better. And as you open yourself up to more emotions you will change and learn to let go of things you cannot control. But equally important, you will be challenged in your faith. Now may be a good time to give over to God all that you can no longer carry or control. You may just find the grass is greener on that side as you begin to appreciate the sense of freedom "letting go" will provide. ➤

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.



When anxiety interferes

Columns

Our World Today

Bert Hielema



This is a good news column. Worldwide surveys indicate that Canada is the best country to live in, and that people in the Netherlands are the happiest. Assuming that this wellbeing also applies to the Dutch now living in Canada, they and their offspring enjoy the best of all worlds. The news could not be better.

We all know that we live on a perilous planet and in a very worried world. In response, people across the globe have been demonstrating, fed up with governments bailing out the bankers at their expense: that too is good news. Paul Gilding, the Australian environmentalist and author of *The Great Disruption*, argues that these public protests are signs that the current growth-obsessed capitalist system is reaching its financial and ecological limits. Says he: "I look at the world as an integrated system, so I don't see these protests, or the debt crisis, or inequality, or the economy, or the climate going weird, in isolation – I see our system in the painful process of breaking down," which is what he means by "The Great Disruption."

In essence Gilding believes that our blind faith in economic growth, our ineffective democracy and our overloading of planet earth is really a form of global suicide. Commentators such as Gilding remind me of the kid in the fairy story who cries out what everyone knows but is afraid to say: "the emperor has no clothes." Recent events in the world of money – the debt crises in Greece, Italy and Spain come to mind – have made it clear that capitalism is counterfeit.

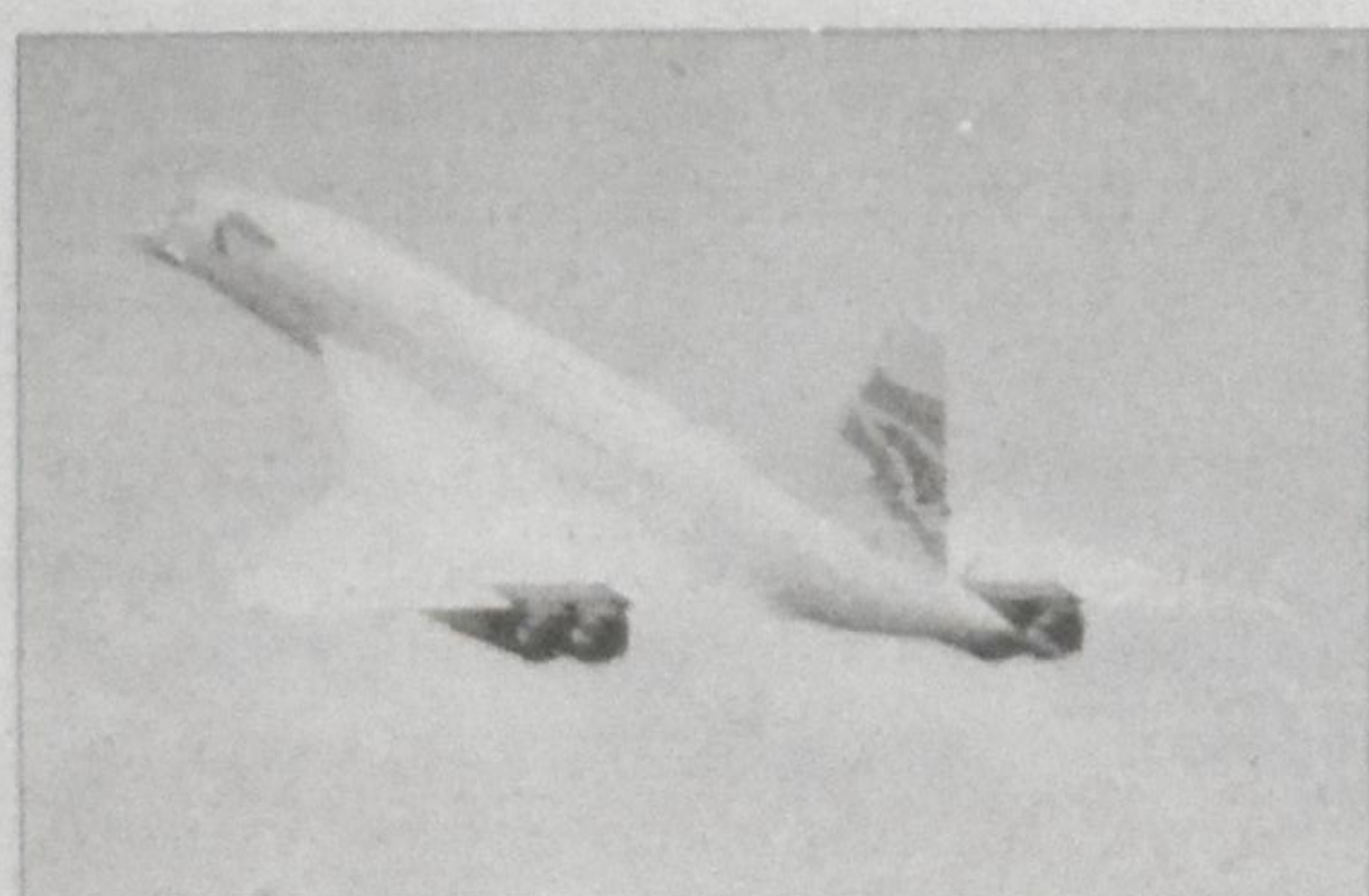
For decades we've been told that global market capitalism benefits all. The reasoning is something like this: "in spite of the rich getting richer, in spite of corporations focusing solely on profit, in spite of pollution going unpriced and unchecked, we are all better off. Wealth might not be equally distributed, but the poor are becoming less poor, those who work hard can always get jobs, those who study diligently always get better positions and there will be enough wealth to fix the environment." These capitalistic promises are now being exposed as fraud. This is good news.

It seems that we could be facing a new depression. If so, it could well be worse than the dirty Thirties. David Leonhardt explains in a recent *New York Times* article that underneath the misery of the Great Depression, the American economy was quietly making enormous strides during the 1930s. Television and nylon stockings were invented. Refrigerators and washing machines turned into mass-market products. Railroads became faster and roads smoother and wider. As the economic historian Alexander J. Field has argued, the

Our world today

1930s constituted "the most technologically progressive decade of the century."

True, the 1930s were a tough time to make a living, with no employment insurance or pensions, but since society then still was mostly rural-based nobody went hungry. We now are mostly city-dwellers, always just three days away from starvation, burdened by mega debt, saddled with political stagnation, aging populations, climate problems and continuous financial crises, just to name the most obvious. All this suggests that if North America and Europe suffer a severe economic downturn today, the destitution will be far more devastating.



The Concorde was once considered the ultimate in air transport, but has now been grounded.

Frankly I see us facing a wall, the end of the future, the end of progress and growth, in essence the end of history, because today, apart from the ultra-vulnerable computer structure, there's really nothing new on the horizon (climate change being the exception). Some examples: Steve Jobs is dead. Space travel has stopped. The Concorde, the ultimate in air transport – three hours from Paris or London to New York or Washington – has been scrapped. Nixon, 40 years ago, promised that the war on cancer would be won. Today not only cancer, but also obesity, Alzheimer's and diabetes are rampant. Nuclear energy was touted as too cheap to measure, but today electricity rates in Ontario have skyrocketed. Average income, in constant dollars, is less now than decades ago. Nothing has really improved in the last 30 years, not health care, not education, not air travel and not work opportunity. Efforts to combat climate change have virtually been abandoned. The fate of the Euro is still an enigma and the US Dollar is still in the doldrums, amplifying the current monetary mayhem. Since our entire system depends on progress, stagnation signals collapse. To me these are the signs of the fig-tree (Matthew 24:32), all pointing to end-times, which means that we have nothing but joy to look forward to: the return of the Lord, and the coming of his glorious kingdom. That is the real Good News! ➤

*Bert Hielema daily prays for that Kingdom to come, a topic of his two new books, *The Shortest Day and Day without End*, available by e-mailing bert@hielem.ca.*

Words from Wild Horses

Kenny Warkentin



This past month my wife and I spoke at a church, sharing our story of coming out of lesbian and gay identities and how Jesus met us in profound life changing ways. My mom also came along and shared her perspective on our story. I am often quite moved and taken aback after she shares. The journey the Lord has her on is quite amazing. She now speaks and writes about this very relevant issue in contemporary church culture.

After our evening of sharing it began to snow. It was our first snow fall of the year, and I for one am never really ready for the cold weather or snow. The next day my mom forwarded me this small piece that she wrote which I thought I would share with you (with her permission). My mother's name is Selma Pauls and this is her reflection, which I think we can all take to heart in one way or another.

Not ready for this!

As rain turned to snow, a passenger in my car exclaimed ... "I'm not ready for this!" When homosexuality hits home, that is probably the most common reaction. "I'm not ready for this!" A gay child's "coming out" hits home much more dramatically than the arrival of the first snowfall. Snow in central Canada is inevitable. Seasons come and seasons go. There shall not cease to be summer and winter, spring time and harvest. It's good that way, and we wouldn't really want it any other way. That is how nature works best. We've done this before. We'll get through another winter, one month at a time.

As parents, the onslaught of an unexpected winter of despair catches most of us unprepared and uninformed. It throws us for a loop. We find ourselves out in the cold. We cry, "God, where are you? What are you doing? We're not ready for this." We flounder and look around for someone who has walked this journey, someone who understands or lends a listening ear. In my own journey with my son, I found great resources through the ministry of Living Waters Canada and Exodus International. I well remember the first two winters that my African refugee family experienced in Canada. They arrived here in mid-December! They needed help with so many things that we take for granted, like dressing appropriately for the weather instead of going out barefoot in sandals to catch the bus. They needed to learn why the car needs to be plugged in and countless other things. We had to walk alongside them, explaining to them what to expect. Their past experience with seasons was so different from ours. What I have learned regarding same sex attraction is that we also have to look at this from the side of the strugglers. How much more intense must this onslaught be for them, as they slowly come to the awareness that they are different from the "norm." This is happening to them in their young formative years, and generally they've walked this journey

Are we ready?

alone, not knowing who to talk to. Nothing has prepared them for this. How painful, bewildering and lonely is that? Today, schools are giving out information about homosexuality, sometimes at a very young age. But how much help is it for the young person to be told to accept how they were made, to act out their compulsions, just make sure you are protected? At Living Waters Canada and Exodus International, people are trained to walk alongside strugglers. They can help them weather the storm and to understand what is happening to them. The coordinators of the River Program are available to churches who want their youth to be adequately prepared to live out their sexuality in a healthy and holy way before they "act out" and become deeply ingrained in a false identity that becomes harder and harder to walk away from. I didn't give my African family inappropriate information about how to cope with winter. Similarly, I don't want to see young people given unhealthy and inappropriate information about how to live out their sexuality. Churches need to be proactive in teaching their youth the truth about sexuality.

Wouldn't it be great if our youth were equipped with a godly sense of their sexuality, so they could go out into the world and confidently say, "Hey, I'm ready for this!" ➤

Selma Pauls

Living Waters

CANADA



exodus

Organizations like Living Waters Canada and Exodus International provide resources to help people who are struggling with their sexuality.

Kenny Warkentin (kennyp66@gmail.com) works full time as an urban missionary with Living Waters Canada and is an artist and musician. He lives in Winnipeg with his wife and daughter.

News

Local missionaries an effective way to spread the gospel across Asia

Keith Knight

It's a stark reality that over 85 percent of Asian countries today do not allow western missionaries into their countries to freely share the gospel. This has resulted in a new and highly effective approach for western organizations such as Gospel for Asia: train national (local) missionaries.

In the eyes of the people, national missionaries do not represent a foreign country or a strange religion. They already know the language or can easily learn a local dialect.

With few or no cultural barriers to overcome, national missionaries can readily share the gospel to those who, unlike their western counterparts, have never heard. Although national missionaries do face many difficult obstacles as they take the message from village to village, they still have an enormous advantage over their coworkers from North America and other non-Asian lands.

Life, however, is not easy for a national missionary. Ishaya, a recent Bible college graduate, was handing out Christian literature when he was attacked and beaten by anti-Christian extremists. "I remember them ripping the tracts out of my hand, and then they started hitting, kicking and tearing my clothes," he recalled later. "I had about 200 rupees (about \$4.40) with me. They took those too. It started to hurt a lot, and I

could see myself bleeding in different areas. Eventually I fell down, and that's when they left me. You know," he added after being released from the hospital, "I am so glad that at least in this small way I could partake in Christ's suffering. I feel so privileged."

Martin Lamb, church relations and development director for Gospel for Asia, based in Stoney Creek Ont., says "it is this kind of commitment and dedication of our brothers that is resulting in a harvest of souls as many are won to Christ through their love and perseverance."

He also points to a symbolic charge given at seminary graduation: "Go to the village God has called you to and dig your grave on the outskirts of the village. If you must die to reach this village, give your life and wait for us in heaven; it's a better place."

Mr. Lamb says a national missionary can be supported at a fraction of the cost of a western missionary. In fact, the average cost is only \$1,440 to \$2,520 per year compared to over \$75,000 per year for a foreign missionary. "The possibility of reaching Asia's multitudes through national missionaries in our generation is very real as thousands are being trained to establish fellowships across Asia," he said.

Thousands of GFA supported national workers are being trained and sent to the mission fields of Asia every year. But

Martin says that "many more are needed if the millions in these countries are to hear the Gospel in our lifetime."

Gospel for Asia has established 54 Bible colleges in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and at the Bhutan border. Currently, nearly 9,000 young men and women are receiving training.

The quality of those graduates is incredible. "Over 98 percent of our graduates minister in places where the

gospel has never before been shared. Frequently, our graduates will establish a new fellowship (small church) within their first year on the field. This incredible fruit from national missions work is being reproduced across Asia!"

On average, these national missionaries establish 15 new fellowships every day across Asia among unreached villages and people groups. Martin Lamb says that "none of this has come easily. National missionaries are paying a high price of suffering, hardship and intense persecution to see fellowships established." The fellowships established in each culture are truly indigenous in character, self-governing, self-propagating and, as soon as possible, self-supporting.

These national missionaries are willing and eager to become engaged in ministry but they are limited by the resources given



Gospel for Asia trains local missionaries to minister among their own people.

to provide a small room to rent, food to eat, and Bibles and tracts to distribute.

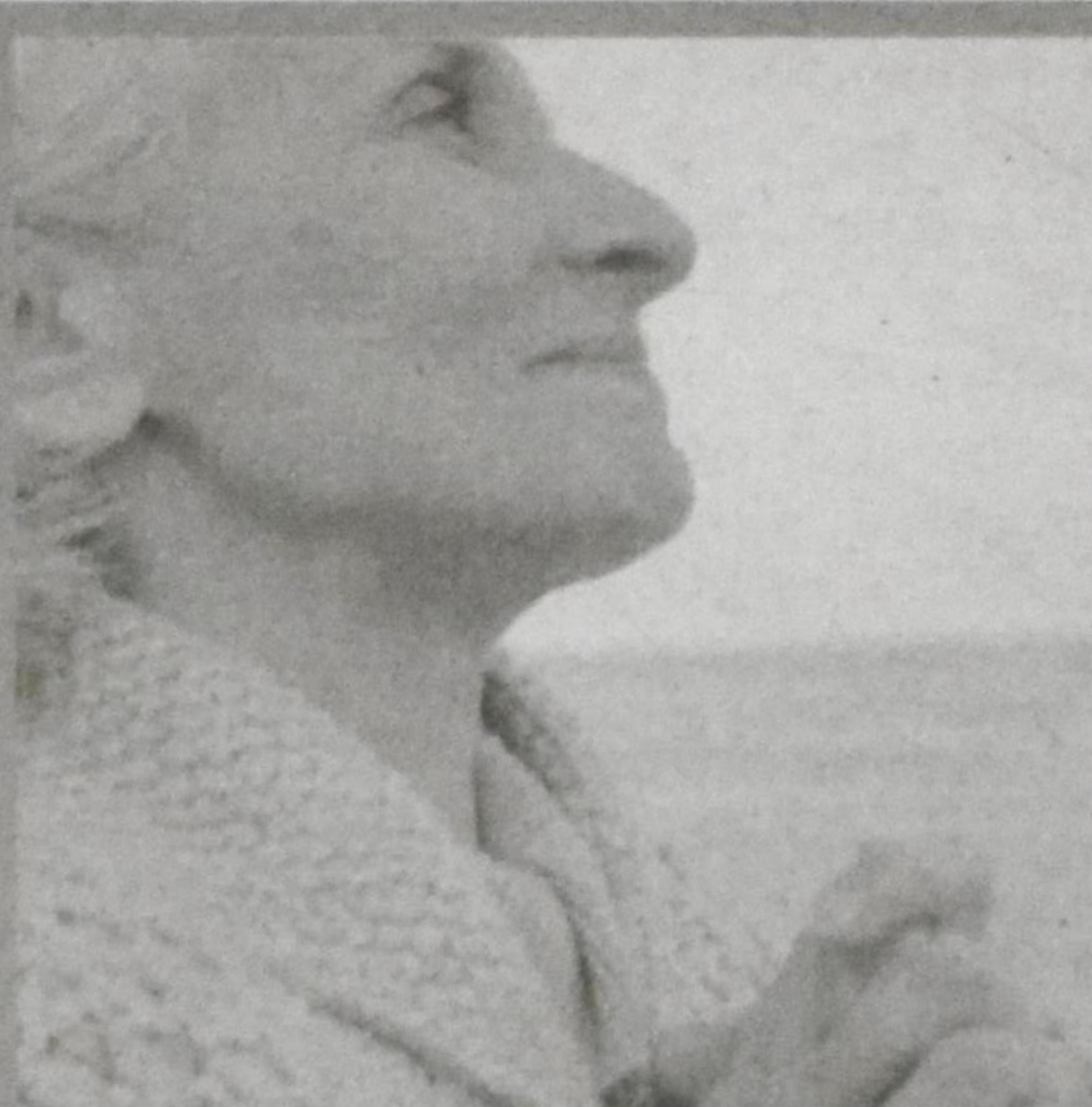
It takes between \$120 and \$210 per month to fully support a national missionary and GFA invites people to help sponsor a missionary for just \$30 a month. This is an effective and economical approach to spreading the gospel to those areas – especially across Asia – where doors are closed to western faith groups. Locally trained Bible college graduates have an incredible advantage of knowing the culture and language, and understanding the needs and struggles with whom they share the gospel.

More information is available from gfa.ca.

Keith Knight is Executive Director of the Canadian Christian Business Federation.



Thinking
CONDO?
Thinking
APARTMENT?
Think Again ...



LOCATED IN THE HEART OF NIAGARA. Evergreen Terrace is your exclusive 55 plus Christian lifestyle community. Owning a Terrace suite is smart planning today for tomorrow. Convenience and easy living go hand in hand with a long and healthy retirement. Discover this unique lifestyle in a Christian campus setting where services and amenities are at your doorstep.



LIFE. It's better at Evergreen Terrace

905-309-7888 • evergreenterrace.ca



This Christmas, give a Jesus-inspired gift of walking, seeing, hearing to kids trapped in poverty.

You can give extraordinary gifts of JOY here and far away through **cbm** Canada's 2011 Christmas catalogue



www.givejoy.ca

or call 1 800 567 2264 for a free catalogue

Charitable Registration No. 10691 8329 RR0001

Classifieds / Jobs

Obituaries

ENNO JAN MEIJERS
1932 - 2011

On October 23rd, 2011 our father passed away. He left this life confident that he would be received by his Saviour and reunited with his wife, Lenie, whom he missed deeply since she passed away last year. Dad was born in Wolfheze, Netherlands on April 9th, 1932.

As a boy, he endured the deprivation and fear of life in an occupied country. But he also experienced the exhilaration and joy of the Dutch, having watched first-hand the invasion of Arnhem and later the liberation of Holland by Canadians.

Those years ingrained in Dad resourcefulness, resilience and unrelenting optimism that stayed with him throughout his life. From a very early age Dad knew and celebrated his dependence on the faithfulness of God. Dad's faith, determination and outlook served him well when he immigrated to Canada in 1953. There he and Mom raised a family, worked productively, served diligently in church and participated in a lively immigrant community.

In 1977, after 24 years in Toronto, opportunity knocked and the family moved to Connecticut. A move to Iowa followed in 1980. Dad thrived in every community in which he was a part. He was a good friend, an honourable and well-liked employer and a faithful family man. Dad's strong character and will to live are best seen in his thirty-year struggle with heart disease.

He defied medical predictions over and over again and managed to live fully to the end. Caring for his ailing wife was his highest priority in the last ten years of his life and he did so with love.

Dad and Mom have 6 children, 15 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren who will miss their father and Opa. We are:

Helena (Henk) Top-Meijers, Daarlerveen, NL;
Hinke (Ed) Weening-Meijers, Calgary, AB;
Gloria (Calvin) Van-Eek Meijers, Kitchener, ON;
Corinna Meijers, Brentwood Bay, BC;
Enno (Ruby) Meijers, Barrie, ON;
Phyllis (Jeff) Alberts-Meijers, Barrie, ON.

Expressions of sympathy may be made to the Unity Christian High School.

GERTRUDE (Truus) KUYVENHOVEN-GRIFFIOEN

November 22, 1926 to September 25, 2011

God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
Psalm 73:26b

The aim of mom's life was to love and serve her LORD, her family and so many others.

Truus was the loving wife of Karel Kuyvenhoven for almost 59 years.

Beloved mother, grandma, and great-grandma to
James Kuyvenhoven: Karl Jr., Ben & Ashley
Margaret & Frank Rhebergen: Sarah & Andrew & Jared,
Heidi & Matt, Micah, Jodi & Russell
Corry & Kaes Vanderkooy: Miriam & Todd, Carolyn & Jeremy
& Simeon, Joanna & Dan & Arend, Angela & Chris
Henry & Rosy Kuyvenhoven: Tim
Andy & Mary Kuyvenhoven: Kristina & Terry & (jr.),
Peter & Jenny & (jr.), Michael
Vincent & Janna Kuyvenhoven: Ryan, Christopher, Karlee.

Correspondence: Karl Kuyvenhoven:
1701- 45 Kingknoll Dr,
Brampton ON L9T 5P2

Now available again... Story Bible for Older Children

by Anne DeVries

This 2 volume set tells the old and new testament stories one by one, vividly bringing them to life for your children.

CAN\$29.95* / US\$29.95* ea.

2 volume set:

CAN\$55.95* / US\$55.95*

Old & New Testament - translation by Theodore Plantinga

Also available:

Bible Stories for Our Little Ones by W.G. Van de Hulst
CAN\$29.95* / US\$29.95* plus postage and GST/HST

Vanderheide Publishing Co. Ltd.

Please call us at 1-800-881-0705 or place your order online
www.goDutch.com/store

• Fax: 604-532-1734 • E-mail: windmill@godutch.com

merit/valentine

Your travel professionals

LONGSTAY HOLIDAYS WINTER 2012**PORTUGAL \$1549.00 FRENCH RIVIERA \$2095.00**

Price includes 28 nights, condominium,
airfare and transfers. Taxes extra \$332.00

SPAIN \$3830.00 15 nights, hotel, plus one week cruise
Taxes \$625.00

Call us for all your travel needs.

Mississauga 905-890-5333 / 1-800-268-6144**London 519-472-2700 / 1-800-265-1141**

TICO Registration #4499356

The Christian Reformed Church
in North America is seeking a new

Director

of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). **Back to God**
BTGMI fulfills a vital role in proclaiming the gospel of Ministries International
Jesus Christ throughout the world using various media that effectively com-
municate Christ in the "language of the heart" of the viewers and listeners.

The Director will give leadership in the strategic planning process and execu-
tion of policies that support the mission of BTGMI and the Christian Reformed
Church. They will be able to articulate the vision and mission for developing
worldwide partnerships.

The successful candidate will have demonstrated skills in casting vision, think-
ing strategically, have experience working in a leadership capacity, working in
a global context and be an ordained minister of the Word in the CRC.

Visit the web site at www.crcna.org for a complete job description and ad-
ditional information about BTGMI. To apply send cover letter and resume to
btgmisearch@crcna.org by February 15, 2012. The process will remain open
until a nominee to fill the position is identified.

PASTOR**Kingston, Ontario's Westside Fellowship CRC**

is a small church with a big heart in an historic university city of 117,000
on the shores of Lake Ontario. We are seeking a pastor who relates well to
all ages, and will help us grow as a church through using his or her gifts of
empowering leadership, engaging preaching and effective worship plan-
ning. The new pastor will help renew our educational ministry and will sup-
port our efforts to reach out to our community.

For further information, or to submit a pastoral profile please email
admin@wfcrc.ca

Principal/COO**Thunder Bay Christian School**

Thunder Bay Christian School, situated in scenic North-
western Ontario, is seeking applications for a full-time
Principal. The City of Thunder Bay, with a population of
over 122,000 people, is located on the north shore of Lake
Superior and surrounded by the beauty of mountains,
lakes, and forests which allow for a variety of outdoor rec-
reational opportunities. Thunder Bay Christian School currently has 104 students
from JK to Grade 10 and will be celebrating their 50th anniversary in the fall of
2012. Information about TBCS is available at www.tbaychristianschool.ca.

The new Principal will be required to provide leadership and direction as the Chief
Operating Officer (COO) of the school. This means that the ideal candidate must
have strong leadership, communication, educational and organizational skills.
He or she must be able to use these skills to successfully revitalize, evaluate,
and encourage an experienced staff to work as a team with the unified purpose
of instructing students to grow spiritually and academically. The successful
candidate will have a sincere and active faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and be
committed to a reformed Christian world view. Some classroom teaching will also
be required. Preference will be given to candidates who hold or are progressing
towards a Christian School Principal Certificate.

Interested applicants should forward a cover letter, resume, statement of faith
and a statement of their philosophy of Christian education which includes their
vision for Christian educational leadership.
Please send this by e-mail to agysen.tbcs@gmail.com or by mail to Angela
Gysen, TBCS Principal Search Committee, R.R. #2, Site 12-36, Thunder Bay,
ON, P7C 4V1.

The deadline for applications is January 9, 2012. Contract begins August 1, 2012.

Vacation**Ft. Myers Florida**

Pool Home for Rent - 2 Bed, 2 Bath,
Sleeps 10, Heated Pool, Hot Tub,
Bikes, Quiet Cul-de-sac, 9 mi. to
Beach. Photos Available.
Phone 905-332-6711

Holiday accomodation in Holland

with vehicle rentals and tours.
www.chestnutlane.nl



**Christmas
is coming
and
so is our
Christmas issue.**

If you would like to
place a Christmas
greeting or special
Christmas advertise-
ment, email admin@christiancourier.ca

**Ottawa Christian Reformed Campus Chaplaincy seeks to hire a
full-time campus chaplain**

to establish a new campus ministry on the bilingual campus of the
University of Ottawa in Ottawa, Ontario.

The successful candidate is committed to the Reformed faith, self motivated, has
advanced academic and/or professional degrees; has experience working pasto-
rally with young adults; relates well to religious and ethnically diverse groups on and
around campus; can nurture healthy relationships with volunteer campus ministry
workers from other denominations and faiths; and, is able to be an incarnational
presence in both the academic and wider communities. Preference will be given
to candidates who are bilingual (French/English).

Interested applicants should send a letter of application, resume, the names and
contact information for three references, and a brief vision for campus ministry to

Prof. Larry Vandergrift, Chair of the Search Committee,
937 Alpine Ave., Ottawa, ON Canada, K2B 5R9.

A job description is available upon request. For more information please contact:
lvdgrift@uottawa.ca. Deadline for applications is December 31, 2011.

Cambridge Christian School is requesting applications from enthusiastic
individuals committed to Christian education to lead the school into the next
decade. We are looking for a person eager to give leadership as

Chief Operating Officer/Principal

to a student body numbering just over 185; an experienced, dedicated staff; a
loyal family base; and a diverse and committed Board. The junior kindergarten to
grade eight school is in the centrally located city of Cambridge in Southwestern
Ontario. An extensive renovation and expansion of the existing facilities, as well
as the addition of a preschool, is well underway and we anticipate completion in
the near future.

Applicants are requested to forward a complete résumé, highlighting relevant
leadership and educational experience, including philosophy of Christian educa-
tion by November 30, 2011, to:

Cambridge Christian School
ATTENTION: Teresa Wolfert
229 Myers Road
Cambridge, Ontario N1R 7H3

(519) 623-2261 www.cambridgechristianschool.com

Advertising

Classifieds

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Christian Courier is published on the second and forth Mondays of the month. Deadline for each issue is 13 days prior to publication date. All personal and family announcements: rose@christiancourier.ca Businesses and organizations: ads@christiancourier.ca

SUBMITTING YOUR AD:

e-mail – see above
Mail: 5 Joanna Dr
St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1

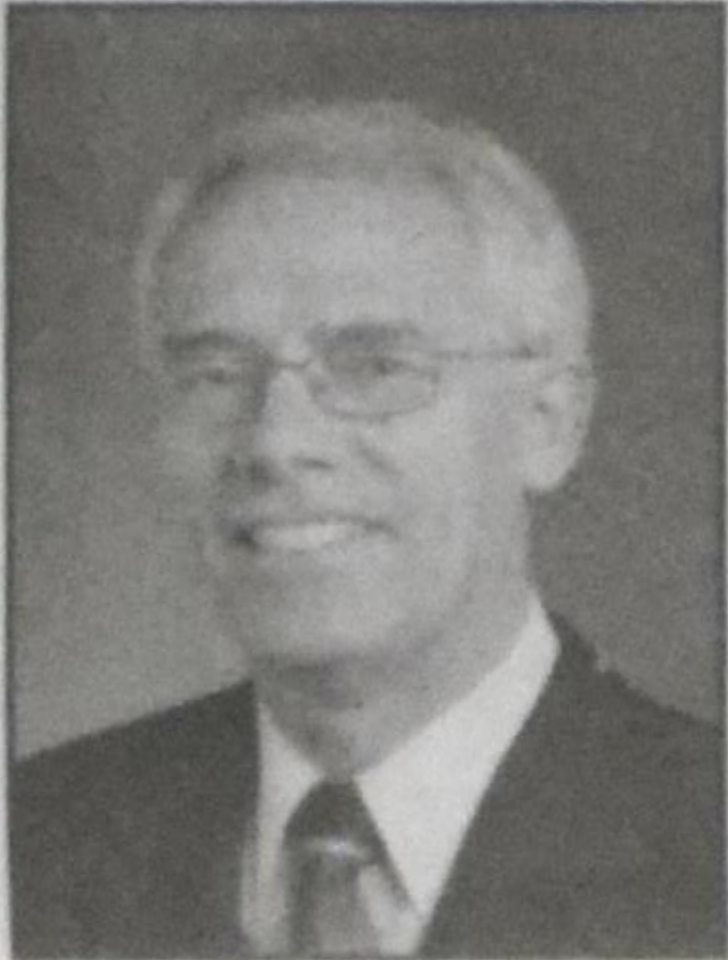
New!!

Submit on-line at christiancourier.ca and click on classified link. You can upload files and photos.

ROYAL LEPAGE

STATE REALTY BROKERAGE

INDEPENDENTLY OWNED & OPERATED



Fred Hagen Broker

905-648-4451

Providing personal, professional real estate service in the Hamilton area for over 35 years.

Email:
fredhagen@royallepage.ca
www.fredhagen.ca

DUTCH TOKO

European Imports

118 Wyndham St. N. Guelph
519-822-4690
Mountain Plaza Mall, Hamilton
905-383-2981

CALVIN

MINDS IN THE MAKING

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan
1-800-688-0122
www.calvin.edu

GARY VAN EYK, CMA


Certified Management Accountant

50 Lakeport Rd. Ste 201
St. Catharines
ON L2N 4P7




Email: garyvaneyk@bellnet.ca
Bus: 905-646-7331 Fx: 905-646-0951

A charitable gift annuity offers:

 REDEEMER
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

- the peace of mind of a guaranteed lifetime income, largely tax free
- the satisfaction of knowing that you will be providing a future gift for Redeemer University College

Blended rate of 6 - 10% (capital returned & interest) for those over 65. Please contact us for your own confidential, no-obligation quote. Information available on other gift-planning options as well.

 Stewardship
SERVICES

Redeemer University College 777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1J4
905.648.2139 x4522 (James) stewardship@redeemer.ca

Low Interest Rates?

Ever considered a charitable GIFT ANNUITY?

Sex and Age	Rate /amount	Charitable receipt	Tax Free	Taxable
Male 70	5.97% \$1,194	\$5,791	\$1,084	\$110
Female 75	6.20% \$1240	\$6,010	\$1,202	\$38

Amount based on sample of \$20,000
Sample for joint life annuity (payable as long as either person is alive)
Male 75 &
Female 75 5.59% \$1,118 \$4,889 \$1,045 \$73

Call or fax for an explanatory brochure and/or confidential no-obligation quotation.

Link Charity
Canada Inc.


Phone: 416-410-4244 | Fax: 416-465-6367 | www.linkcharity.ca
1-800-387-8146 | 45 Harriet St, TORONTO, ON M4L 2G1

When you're gone, will your giving continue?

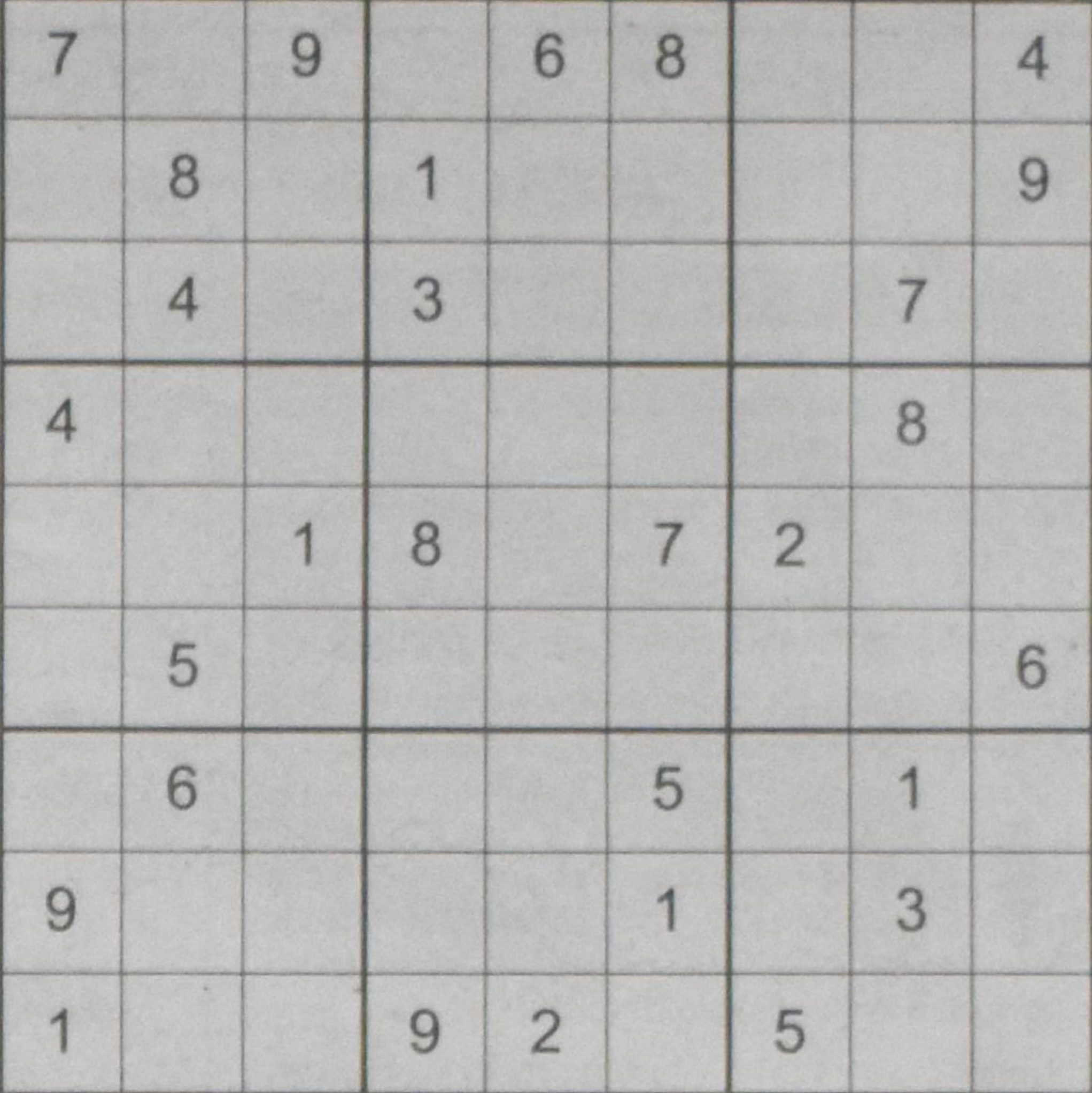
Leave a Legacy.

CSS offers a no-cost home visit, providing professional, impartial advice.

Connecting Donors, Charities & Ministries

 Stewardship
SERVICES

1-800-267-8890 | admin@cssservices.ca
www.cssservices.ca



Ensuring PEACE of mind from WHEREVER you sit



CALL US TODAY FOR:

HOME / AUTO / LIFE / DISABILITY
FARM AND AGRICULTURAL INSURANCE
COMMERCIAL / BUSINESS INSURANCE

 P.V.&V. Insurance Centre Ltd.
BUSINESS • HOME • FARM • AUTO • LIFE
1 866 694 7276 | 905 632 6192
www.pvv-insurance.com

 MEESTER
INSURANCE CENTRE
Tel: 1 800 465 8256 | 905 957 2333
www.meesterinsurance.com

 AVIVA
Insurance
1 800 387 4518
www.avivacanada.com

c/b P.V.&V. Insurance Centre Inc.

RAMAKER'S IMPORTS INC.

We specialize in

DUTCH FOOD / CHEESE / CHOCOLATE / TEXTILES & GIFTS

579 Ontario St. Fax: 905-934-3344
St. Catharines Tel:
Ontario L2N 4N8 905-934-6454
E-mail: ramakersimports@bellnet.ca

Tax Free Savings Account (TFSA)

Now available.
Call for an application.

CRC Extension Fund

416-461-1207

Hulse & English

Funeral Home

75 Church St. St. Catharines
905-684-6346 - 24 Hours

Ian H. Russell - Director
Holly Rousseau - Managing Director
Serving the community over 150 years

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

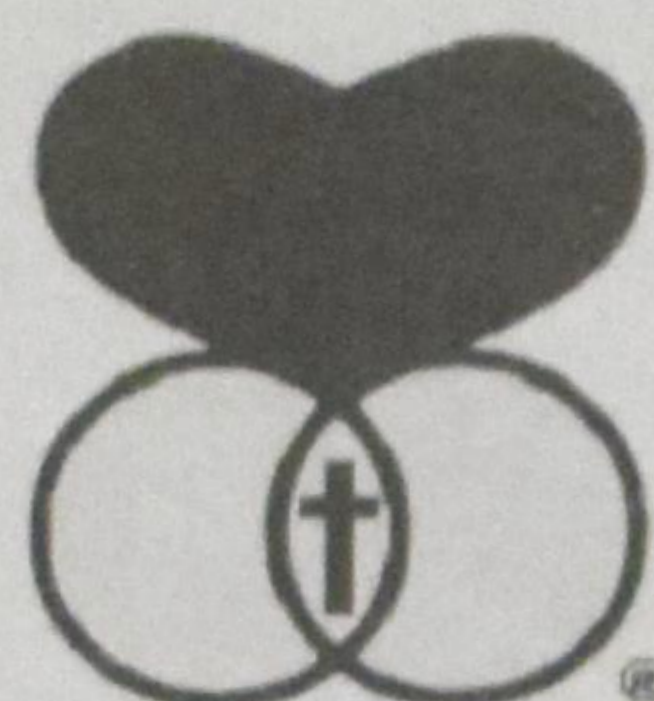
- Nov 18** The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah 8 pm Christ Church Anglican, 4 Elizabeth Street North, **Brampton** \$30, Students \$10
- Nov 20** The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah 8 pm St. James Anglican Church, **Caledon East**. Information is on our website www.georgetownbachchorale.com
- Nov 20** CRC of **Stratford**, Ontario 60 year celebration. More information to come or at stratfordcrc.org
- Nov 23** The Martin Mans Formation, Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas St., **Woodstock** 8 pm. Info & tickets at: musicasacrachorus.com
- Nov 24** Musica Sacra Chorus & The Martin Mans Formation, Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby** 8 pm. Info & tickets at: musicasacrachorus.com
- Nov 25** Sacred Harmonies from around the World. Knox Presbyterian Church, 58 Riddell St., **Woodstock**. Info & tickets at: musicasacrachorus.com
- Nov 26** A Celebration of Choral Classics, The Sanderson Centre for the Arts, 88 Dalhousie St., **Brandford** 8 pm. Info & tickets at: musicasacrachorus.com
- Dec 3** The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah at 8 pm Old Town Hall, Willow and Bower Streets, **Acton**. Information is on our website www.georgetownbachchorale.com
- Dec 3** Baroque performance of Handel's Messiah, Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church, **Jordan**, Ont. 7:30 pm.
- Dec 4** The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah at 2:30 pm St. Elias Ukrainian Church, 10193 Heritage Rd, **Brampton**. Website: georgetownbachchorale.com

2012

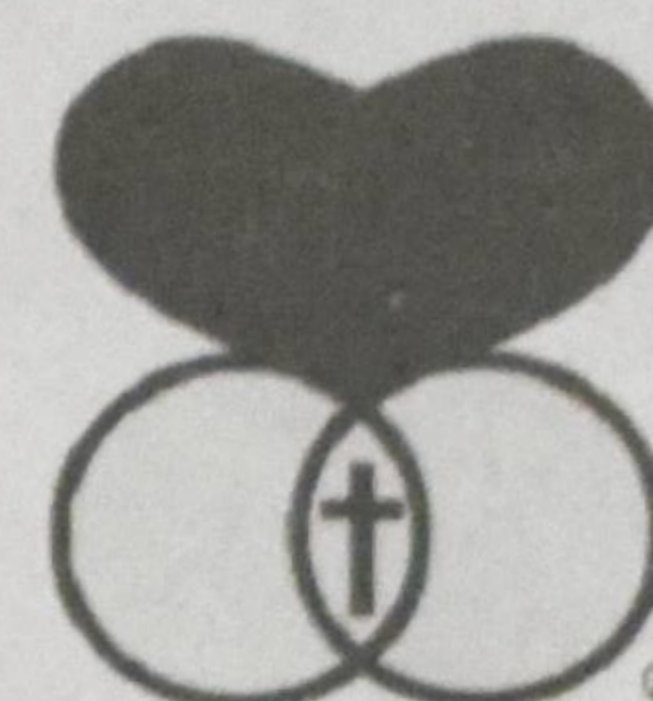
- Jan 15** Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Veenstra will be preaching. DVDs are available.
- Feb 17-19** Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend. St. Catharines, ON Register at www.reformedme.org
- Feb 18-20** Ottewell CRC, Edmonton, AB, will DV celebrate 50 years of God's grace and faithfulness. For more information visit: ottewell@telusplanet.net.
- Apr 20-22** Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend. London, ON Register at www.reformedme.org

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Learn how to keep your marriage alive and vibrant!
Attend a Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend!



RESTORE Communication
REKINDLE Romance
RENEW Commitment



St. Catharines, ON February 17-19, 2012
London, ON April 20-22, 2012

Register at www.reformedme.org



Wondering what to give a family member or friend for Christmas?
Consider a gift subscription to *Christian Courier*. They will enjoy it all year long.

Email Rose
rose@christiancourier.ca
or call
1-800-969-4838

A BRAND NEW NOVEL

"THE CROOKED ROAD"

by Andy Borger

Story takes place in the early immigrant years. The book is an excellent gift for the "old timers" or for their children to read about the parent's "good old days".

Price \$ 25.00 in Canada or \$ 30.00 outside Canada.
(Includes shipping and handling.)

ORDER BY;

Andy Borger, 27 Kissingbridge Lane, Newcastle, ON., L1B 0B2.



De Nederlandse COURANT

North America's oldest and most published
Dutch language paper and exclusive aftermarket
distributor of the Libelle and Margriet
magazines in its 55th year of publication.

SPECIAL NEW SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

De Nederlandse COURANT: ☐ 1 year \$15.00 (regular \$33.00)
☐ 2 years \$40.00 (regular \$62.50)

☐ Margriet or ☐ Libelle with De Nederlandse COURANT:
☐ 1 year \$125.00 (regular \$160.00)
☐ 2 years \$220.00 (regular \$280.00)

*Include this ad with your order.

Mail your name and address with your cheque to:
De Nederlandse COURANT
2110 Hunt Crescent, Burlington ON L7M 2N9

★ 40 YEARS OF SERVICE ★



"...serving Christian
Reformed churches
and Christian schools
since 1970"

Your funds will be invested in Christian
Reformed Church and Christian school building
projects in Canada.

New rates to December 31, 2011

We pay 2.75% on CRC deposits.
Earn approx. 3.0% on RRSP/RRIF/TFSA

Write: Christian Reformed Extension Fund
45 Harriet St, Toronto ON M4L 2G1
Email: harry@crcextensionfund.org
Call: 416-461-1207 Fax: 416-465-6367

HANDEL'S
MESSIAH

Critically Acclaimed Baroque
Performance of Handel's
Messiah coming to Jordan

Saturday,
December 3, 7:30 PM

Immanuel Orthodox
Reformed Church
2900 Fourth Avenue,
Jordan, Ontario
Performed by Arcady Directed
by Ron Beckett
Tickets: \$20.00 each
To purchase, call
905-892-9160

You'll LOVE where we take you!

Interested in seeing the places
where so many Biblical events
took place?

Christian Cruise – Tour
Seven Churches of
Revelation, Paul's Journeys,
Israel & Egypt

March 7-23, 2012
starting at \$4,238.00 CAD, Incl airfare
from Toronto, taxes, excursions,
meals & transfers. Add on airfare
from Vancouver \$399.00.

Join us for Christian fellowship, Hymn sing & Devotions
Sunday worship service
Hosted by Ralph & Grace Visscher

Visschers Travel & Cruise
1-800-811-2388

Azamara Journey Cruise
of Scotland, Ireland,
England, France, Wales

Depart July 28, 2012
12 nights. Castles, Vineyards,
Beautiful Landscapes
Starting at \$3728.35 USD Incl.
Taxes, Tips & Wine with Lunch & Din-
ner. \$50.00 shipboard credit.

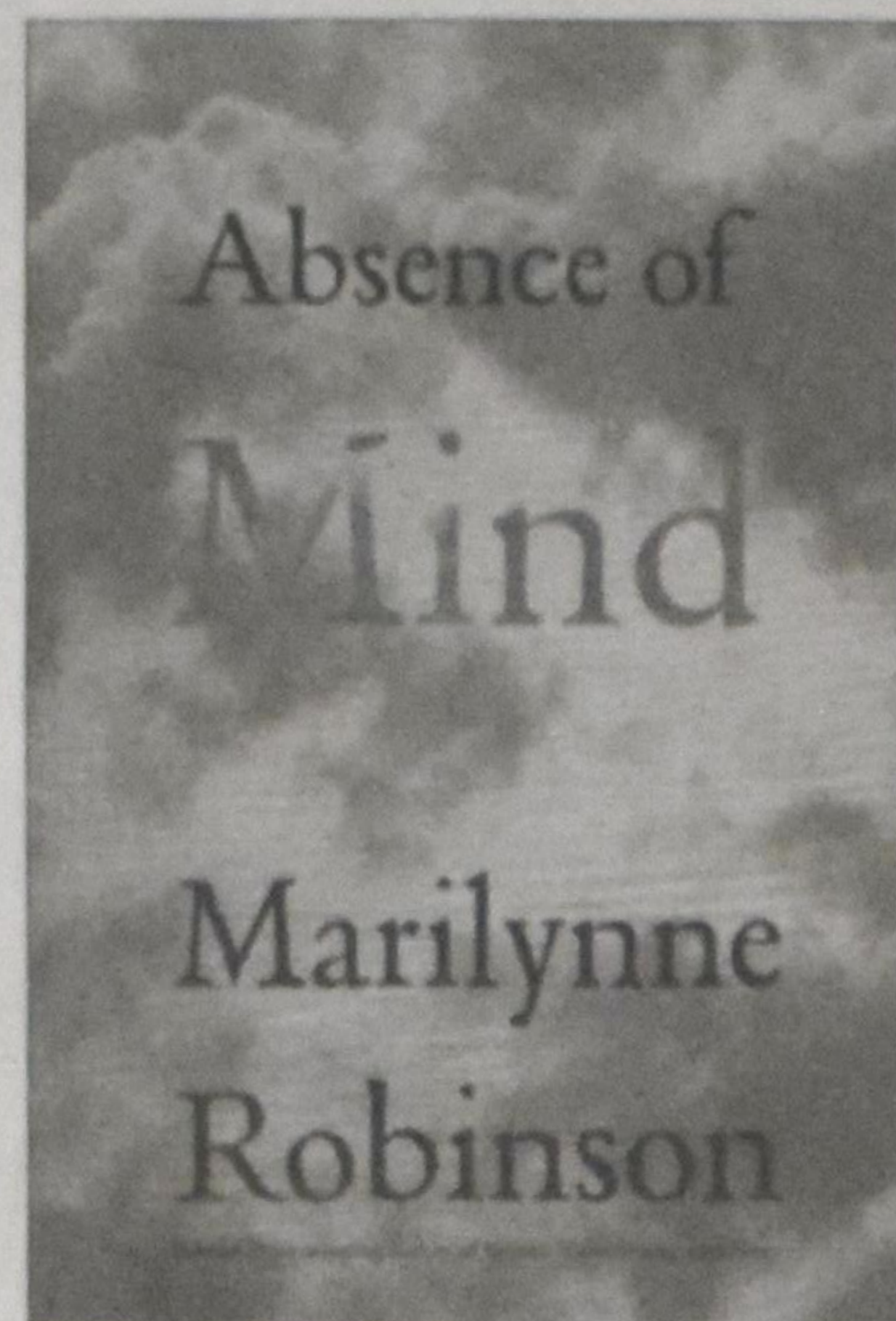


BOOK TODAY,
Limited Space left!!

Christian Guided Tours
gracevisscher@shaw.ca

Review

'Crowned with glory and worship': Marilynne Robinson's humanist Calvinism



Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self by Marilynne Robinson. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010.

Philip Christman

Ten years or so ago, when I began reading Marilynne Robinson, not many of my friends seemed to have heard of her. She hadn't written a novel since *Housekeeping* (1980), and her last two books had been deeply demanding works of plague-on-all-your-houses polemical nonfiction – not, in other words, the kinds of things that turn up on bestseller lists. Since then, Robinson has published two more novels in rapid succession, won a Pulitzer and an Orange Prize, given innumerable interviews and headlined literary festivals throughout the world (including the 2006 and upcoming 2012 Calvin College Festival of Faith and Writing). She's even turned up on "The Daily Show." Most remarkably, she's done all of it while calling herself a Calvinist.

Nor is her Calvinism an odd but finally irrelevant biographical detail like Arthur Conan Doyle's late forays into spiritualism, or Prince's recent lurch into the arms of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Calvinism has informed Robinson's aesthetics, her choice of subject matter, and the whole mood that permeates her books during her period of highest productivity and public acclaim. The novel that won her the Pulitzer, *Gilead*, is about a middle-aged Congregationalist pastor, steeped in Reformed thought, who lives in the titular Iowa town. To grasp just how strange this is, consider that the last major modern novel to use "Gilead" as a place name

was Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* – it's the name of a theocratic dystopia.

A tale of two Calvins

Theocracy and dystopia are, of course, what many people imagine when you mention the name John Calvin to them. We'll have to take a quick detour through history to understand why this is, and how such a nasty person has inspired some of the most intelligent, lucid, compassionate writing in modern English.

On the one hand there is the Calvin of reputation, who invented predestination and taught that wealth is a sign of God's favour. This Calvin enjoyed a theocratic reign of terror in Geneva, where the national pastimes were frowning and burning heretics. He is more or less an invention. To find another example of an intellectual so successfully lied about to so many people in free societies, you'd have to read up on Noam Chomsky. Calvin's teachings on wealth are in line with the Christian tradition generally: he was suspicious of it, and encouraged in his followers a degree of charity that would scandalize the modern Western middle class. As for sixteenth-century Geneva, of course no modern person would want to live there; the sixteenth century was an awful time for anybody not excited by torture, illiteracy, disease, poverty, and heads on spikes. When considered against this background, Geneva looks good. It offered better opportunities for the poor, the illiterate, and women than did most other major cities in Europe. (See E. William Monter's "Women in Calvinist Geneva (1550-1800)," which appeared in the Winter 1980 issue of the women's studies journal *Signs*, for a nuanced take on the last of these topics.) On Geneva especially, scholarship and popular discourse seem to operate from different sets of facts. You can read all sorts of lurid stories about Calvinist Geneva in tertiary sources that don't turn up in primary and secondary ones.

Calvin did teach predestination, and he did connive in the burning of the heretic Michael Servetus. The latter is indefensible, so I won't waste time defending it. (It is true that Calvin's human-rights record is generally better than that of other major sixteenth-century intellectuals. Still: tell

that to Servetus's next of kin.) Predestination, of course, has terrified children and occupied dissertators for centuries. Its consequences are impossible to accept – but so are the consequences of the opposing view, that God wills the salvation of everyone but leaves the working-out of that salvation up to us. (Earn my way to heaven? I can't even keep up with my laundry.) Cruel paradoxes lie buried in any worldview, religious or not, that tries to take account of time and suffering. Calvin faced and embraced these paradoxes, sometimes with an enthusiasm that makes readers flinch. But even here, it's Calvin's theological system, with its strict categories of the elect and the reprobate, that provided the theological scaffolding on which the later theologian Karl Barth built his argument for the possibility of universal salvation – the only really defensible one I know.

So much for the Calvin of reputation. Robinson draws on the less-known side of Calvin: the Renaissance humanist. This Calvin, like many of his artistic and philosophical contemporaries, has fallen in love with the beauty and possibility of the human person – so much so that his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* begins by announcing that knowledge of God and knowledge of humanity are connected to the point of inseparability. In other words, if you want to know God's majesty, you can look at stars or mountains – but you must first look at your loser cousin Fred, for he is made in the image of God. It is this high view of humanity – this sense that grandeur and majesty, so far from being opposed to us (as in the thought-world of pagan Greece and Rome), are actually found in our silly selves – that animates Robinson's novels. She pays loving attention to drunks and eccentrics, showing them with a fullness that reminds me of Proust and a generosity that reminds me of, well, Christ.

Defending the human person

So Robinson's fiction praises the image of God as found in people. Her nonfiction, so different in tone and content, achieves the same goal indirectly by defending a high view of human nature and possibility against fashionable denials of it.

There is widespread belief in the existence of a "history of warfare of science with theology." A nineteenth-century book by that title – a farrago of made-up facts that historians of science gave up on generations ago – has set the tone for this debate and, not incidentally, includes some fake anti-science quotes attributed to Calvin. In any case, it's a notion so fuzzy that neither scientists nor theologians should be happy with it. Perhaps it survives because it serves some peoples' psychological needs: some Christians, for example, may find it easier to harass biology teachers than to actually obey Christ's risky injunctions. And some scientists probably find that a huge, vaguely-defined enemy gives their jobs a little more romance. Such writers offer definitions of "religion" so transparently self-serving that they would raise suspicions as to the authors' mental fitness – if these same definitions weren't so clearly intended to nourish that heady sense of lonely superiority that makes a book popular among college kids. The philosopher Daniel Dennett, for example, describes religion as a group attempt to secure the God's or gods' favour. It's as if he's never heard of the Protestant Reformation.

Robinson draws on the less-known side of Calvin: the Renaissance humanist. This Calvin ... has fallen in love with the beauty and possibility of the human person.

Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self, Robinson's most recent book, argues that the "scientific worldview" from which writers like Dennett claim to speak owes more to bad philosophy than to science. It is a sort of lobotomized logical positivism, censorious toward metaphysical ideas (the soul, human exceptionalism, etc.) because of their long association with religious thought, but constantly slipping, unaware, into metaphysical claims – as when sociobiologist E.O. Wilson, for example, deduces from the existence of biodiversity the

moral rightness of awe toward it. Robinson argues further that this tendency is as inimical to science as it is to any other human pursuit, because it renders felt experience indescribable, and creates a vacuum in which weak accounts of human nature flourish. "If 'mind' and 'soul' are not entities in their own right," she writes, "they are at least terms that have been found useful for describing aspects of the expression and self-expression of our very complex nervous system." And if these terms, in the twinned histories of religion and philosophy, are sometimes used to block rather than to enable inquiry, Robinson shows that this tendency enjoys a robust enough life without them.

She is likewise unimpressed by biologists' efforts to explain away human kindness. One popular theory suggests that when you help a stranger, it's because of a misfiring of the emotional responses that our self-protective genes have evolved to manoeuvre us into preserving our kin (and, thus, themselves). "What are 'we,'" she responds, "if we must be bribed and seduced by illusory sensations we call love or courage or benevolence? Why need our genes conjure these better angels, when, presumably, the species of toads and butterflies ... flourish without them?"

Absence of Mind is scathing and funny on all these subjects and many others – memes, Richard Dawkins, Freud, Nietzsche. Robinson prefers to these self-congratulatingly austere visionaries the account of humanity offered in Psalm 8, Geneva translation: "Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and crowned him with glory and worship." Change a few pronouns, and I'm not sure that modern thought offers us a more progressive, liberal, or humane understanding anywhere – nor, when his full body of work is considered, a more Calvinist one.



Philip Christman holds an MFA in Fiction from the University of South Carolina and an MA in literature from Marquette University. He teaches writing at North Carolina Central University.